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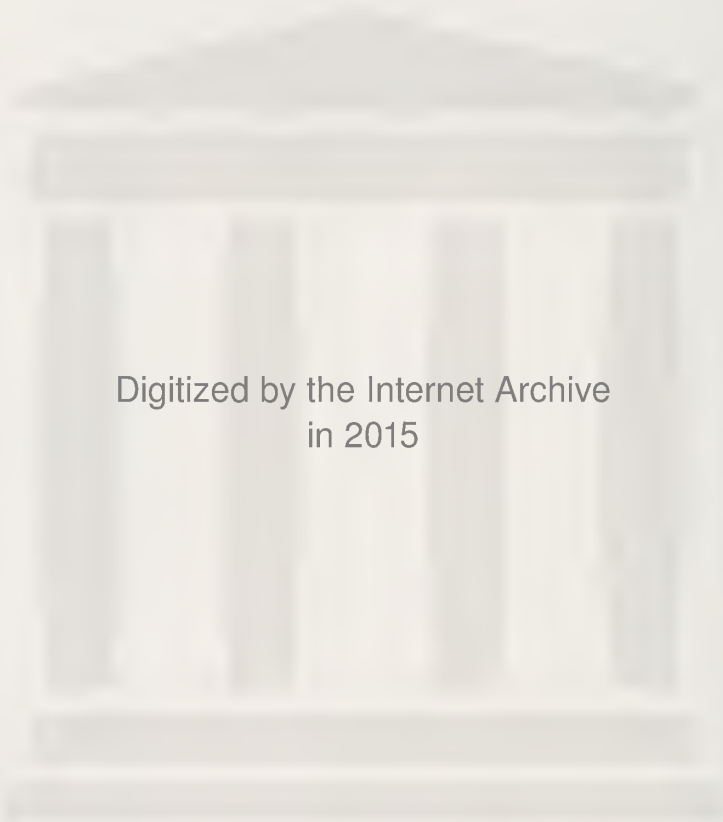
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THE

WORKS

OF THE

REV. JOHN NEWTON,

LATE PASTOR OF THE UNITED PARISHES OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH AND ST. MARY WOOLCHURCH-HAW, LOMBARD STREET, LONDON.

CONTAINING,

AN AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE, ETC. LETTERS ON RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS, CARDIPHONIA, DISCOURSES INTENDED FOR THE PULPIT, SERMONS PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF OLNEY, A REVIEW OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY, OLNEY HYMNS, POEMS, MESSIAH, OCCASIONAL SERMONS, AND TRACTS.

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED,

MEMOIRS OF HIS LIFE, &c

BY THE REV. RICHARD CECIL, A. M.

COMPLETE IN TWO VOLUMES.

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PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

A

REVIEW

OF

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.

INTRODUCTION.

Though the actions of mankind appear greatly diversified from the influence of particular circumstances, human nature has been always the same. The history of all ages and countries uniformly confirms the scriptural doctrine, that man is a depraved and fallen creature; and that some selfish temper, ambition, avarice, pride, revenge, and the like, are, in effect, the main springs and motives of his conduct, unless so far, and in such instances, as they are corrected and subdued by divine grace.

Therefore, when St. Paul speaks of the most dreadful degree of impiety that can be imagined, enmity against God, he does not consider it as the fault of the particular time in which he lived, or impute it singly either to the idolatrous Heathens, or the obstinate Jews, but he affirms universally, that the carnal mind (το φρονημα της σαρκος,) the wisdom, the most spiritual and discerning faculty of man, is enmity against God. Men differ considerably in capacity, rank, education, and attainments; they jar in sentiments and interests; they mutually revile, hate, and destroy one another: but in this point they all agree; whether Greeks or Barbarians, wise or ignorant, bond or free, the bent and disposition of their minds, while unrenewed by grace, is black and implacable enmity against the blessed God.

To those who acknowledge the authority of scripture, St. Paul's express assertion should be sufficient proof of this point, if we could produce no other; but besides the many other passages in the book of God to the same effect, it may be demonstrated by the most obvious proofs, experience and matter of fact. The history of the Old Testament from the death of Abel, the nature and grounds of the opposition which Jesus and his apostles met with, and the treatment of the most exemplary Christians that have lived in succeeding ages, are indisputable evidences of this offensive truth; for what can be stronger marks of enmity against God, than to despise his word, to scorn his favour, to oppose his will, to caress his enemies, and to insult and abuse his servants, for no other offence than their attachment to his service?

But when, from these premises, the apostle infers, "so then they that are in the flesh cannot please God," though the consequence is evident, it may seem at first view unnecessary; for can it be supposed that the carnal mind, which breathes a spirit of defiance and enmity against God, will have any desire or thought of pleasing him? Yet thus it is.—The carnal mind is not only desperately wicked, but deeply deceitful; it deceives others, and often it deceives itself. As the magicians of Egypt, though enemies to Moses, attempted to counterfeit his miracles, and as Balaam could say, "The Lord my God," though he was wickedly engaged against the Lord's people; so it has been usual with many who have hated

and denied the power of godliness, to value themselves highly upon the form of it, and while they are alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, they affect to be thought his best servants, and make the most confident claims to his favour.

The pure religion of Jesus cannot but be despised and rejected by the carnal mind: the natural man receiveth not the things of God; they are beyond his sphere; he does not apprehend them, and therefore cannot approve them; nay, he is averse and unwilling to meddle with them, and therefore it is impossible he should understand them. But the fiercest opposition arises from the complication of presumption and hypocrisy we have spoken of; when men, destitute of the Spirit of God, from a vain conceit of their own wisdom and goodness, arrogate to themselves an authoritative decision in religious concerns, and would reduce the judgment and practice of others to their own corrupt standard.

Such was eminently the character of the Scribes and Pharisees, who, with unwearied malice, persecuted our Lord to the death of the cross; and he forewarned his disciples to expect the like treatment; he sent them forth as lambs in the midst of wolves, and assured them that their attachment to him would draw on them the hatred of mankind, so far as even to deprive them of the rights of civil society, and the pleasures of relative life. A man's foes shall be those of his own household: his parents shall forget their affection, his children their duty, his servants their reverence, and even the wife of his bosom shall despise him, when he boldly professes the gospel; nay, the most amiable qualities, joined to the most endearing connections, are not sufficient wholly to suppress the enmity which fills the hearts of the unregenerate, against those in whom they discern the image of Christ; and that this enmity would sometimes assume a religious form, and under that appearance, proceed to the greatest extremities, he informed them, in another place: "The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth God service."

If a faith and practice, agreeable to the New Testament, were not always attended with a measure of this opposition, we should want one considerable evidence that the gospel is true; and infidels would be possessed of one solid objection against it, namely, That our Lord was mistaken when he predicted the reception his doctrine would meet with. But the scriptures cannot be broken: the word of Christ is fulfilling every day, and especially in this particular. Many, perhaps, will be ready to object here, and to maintain, that, in our nation, and at this present time, the charge is invidious and false. It will be pleaded, that when Christianity had to struggle with Jews and Pagans, it could not but be opposed; but that with us, under the guard of a national establishment, an opposition to Christianity (unless by the feeble efforts of Deists and Libertines) is impracticable and inconsistent by the very terms; and that if the delusions of a few visionary enthusiasts are treated with that contempt and indignation which they justly deserve. this should not be styled an opposition to Christianity, but rather a warrantable concern for its vindication, especially as no coercive methods are used; for though some attempts have been made to restrain the leaders from poisoning the minds of the people, yet no person is injured, either in life or property, on account of his opinions, how extravagant soever they may be.

To this extenuation it may be replied,

1. I do not assert that persecution and reproach must necessarily attend the name of a Christian, or that it is not possible to make a high profession of religion under that name, and at the same time preserve or acquire a large share of the honours, riches, and friendship of the world; but I maintain with the apostle, that "all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." The distinction he makes in these words, is observable:—So much godliness as may be professed without a peculiar relation to Jesus, the world will bear; sobriety and benevolence they will applaud; nay, even prayers, fastings, and other external acts, may be commended:—but, to live godly in Christ Jesus,—so as to profess our whole dependence upon his free salvation; to seek all our strength from his grace·

to do all expressly for his sake; and then to renounce all trust or confidence in what we have done, and to make mention of his righteousness only:—this the world cannot bear; this will surely provoke the contempt or hatred of all who have not the same spirit, whether accounted Christians or Infidels, Papists or Protestants. That nothing less than what I have mentioned can be the import of living godly in Christ Jesus, I shall in due time prove by a cloud of witnesses.

2. I acknowledge, with thankfulness to God, and to those whom he has placed in just authority over us, that the interposition of stripes, imprisonment, tortures, and death. in matters pertaining to conscience, has no place in our happy land:

> ——— jacet (semperque jaceat!)
> Divini imago zeli et pestis.

The spirit of persecution is repressed by the wisdom of our laws and the clemency of our princes, but we have no ground to believe it is extinct, or rather we have sufficient evidence of the contrary. Not to mention some recent instances in which power has been strained to its full extent, it is notorious that scorn, invective, and calumny (which can act unrestrained by human laws,) are employed for the same ends and purposes, which, in other countries, are more speedily effected by anathemas and sanguinary edicts.

3. The opposition I am speaking of is not primarily between men and men, simply considered, but between the spirit of the world and the Spirit that is of God, and therefore the manifestation of each will be in mutual proportion. The Lord Jesus himself sustained the fiercest contradiction of sinners, because his character was superlatively excellent: his apostles, though far inferior to their Lord, expressed so much of his temper and conduct, that they were counted worthy to suffer shame in the next degree to him: As he was, so were they in the world. St. Paul, who laboured more abundantly than his brethren, experienced a larger share of dishonour and ill treatment. Though educated at the feet of Gamaliel, and no stranger to Grecian literature, when he showed himself determined to know nothing but Jesus, and to glory only in his cross, he was accounted by Jew and Gentile, as the filth and off-scouring of all things; and thus it will hold universally. If, therefore, any who sincerely espouse the gospel, meet with little disturbance or censure, it is not because the carnal mind is better reconciled to the truth than formerly in the apostle's days, but because our zeal, faith, and activity are so much inferior to theirs, and our conduct more conformable to the prevailing taste around us.

4. I confess, that (as our Saviour has taught us to expect by the parable of the tares) revivals of religion have been generally attended with some incidental offences, and counterfeited by many false appearances. It has been so in times past; it is so at present; and we are far from justifying every thing, and in every degree, what the world is ready to condemn. However, we cannot but complain of a want of candour and ingenuousness in this respect also. Many who bring loud charges against what is irregular and blameable, are evidently glad of the opportunity to prejudice and alarm weak minds. They do not confine their reproof to what is erroneous and unscriptural, but endeavour, by ambiguous expressions, invidious names, and indiscriminate censures, to obscure the state of the question, and to brand error and truth with the same mark of infamy: they either cannot, or will not distinguish between evangelical principles and the abuse of them; and when the distinction has been pointed out to them again and again, they refuse attention, and repeat the same stale misrepresentations which they know have been often refuted: they will not allow a grain for infirmity or inadvertence in those whom they oppose, while they demand the largest concessions for themselves and their adherents: they expect strict demonstrations from others, while, in their own cause, they are not ashamed to produce slanders for proofs, and jests for arguments:—thus they triumph without a victory, and decide *ex cathedra*, without so much as entering upon the merits of the cause. These methods, however successful, are not new inventions: by such arts and arms as these, christianity was op-

posed from its first appearance: In this way Lucian, Celsus, and Julian employed their talents, and made themselves famous to future times.

I judge it therefore a seasonable undertaking to attempt the apology of Evangelical Christianity, and to obviate the sophistry and calumnies which have been published against it; and this I hope to do, without engaging in any controversy, by a plain enumeration of facts. I propose to give a brief delineation of Ecclesiastical History from our Saviour's time; and, that the reader may know what to expect, I shall here subjoin the principal points I have in view.

1. I shall consider the genius and characteristic marks of the gospel which Jesus taught, and show that, so long as this gospel was maintained in its purity, it neither admitted or found a neutrality, but that all who were not partakers of its benefits were exceedingly enraged against it. I shall make it appear, that the same objections which have attended any reformations in later ages, were equally strong against christianity, as taught by Christ and his first disciples; and that the offences and irregularities which have been known to attend a revival of evangelical doctrine in our time, were prevalent, to a considerable degree, under the preaching and inspection of the apostles.

2. When I come to the lives and conduct of those called the *Fathers*, whose names are held in ignorant admiration by thousands, I shall prove, on the one hand, that the doctrines for which the fathers were truly commendable, and by which many were enabled to seal their profession with their blood, were the same which are now branded with the epithets of *absurd* and *enthusiastic;* and, on the other hand, that the fathers, however venerable, were men like ourselves, subject to mistakes and infirmities, and began very soon to depart from the purity and simplicity of the gospel.

3. The progress of our history will manifest that the accession of wealth and power to the christian profession proved greatly detrimental to the faith, discipline, and manners of the churches; so that, after the emperors publicly espoused the cause of Christ, the power and beauty of the gospel was gradually eclipsed. Yet, in the most degenerate times, God had a spiritual people, who, though partaking in some degree of the general declension, retained so much of the primitive truth and practice as to incur the hatred and persecution of (what is called) the christian world.

4. I shall treat of the means and instruments by which the Lord supported and revived his declining cause during several centuries:—1. In the valleys of Piedmont, Provence, &c. by Berangarius, Waldo, and others. 2. In England, by Wickliff and his followers. 3. In Bohemia, by John Huss and Jerome of Prague. 4. In Germany, by Luther. Here I shall take occasion to observe, (1.) That these successive reformations were all prejected and executed, so far as God was pleased to give success, upon the same principles which are now so industriously exploded by many who would be thought champions of the Protestant faith; and (2.) That Luther's reformation, the most extensive and successful, and of which we have the best accounts, was soon followed by errors, hercsies, and a numerous train of abominations (as had been the case with primitive christianity) which the Romanists, in imitation of their Pagan predecessors, joyfully laid to the charge of the doctrine which Luther preached.

5. As it was not long before the reformed countries needed a second reformamation, I shall give some account of the endeavours of many good men in Germany and other places, in this view; their principles, success, and the treatment they met with from those who ought to have supported them, and then I shall briefly take notice of the similar occurrences in our own country, from the end of Qucen Mary's reign to the present time, together with what has been most remarkable in the history of the gospel in our American settlements.

6. I shall occasionally consider the character and conduct of those persons whom God has honoured with eminent usefulness, in the different periods of his church, point out the defects of their plan, and the mistakes which, through infirmity, in some degree blemished their undertakings.

7. Finally, to make it evident that the spiritual worshippers of God have always been a sect every where spoken against, I shall enumerate some of the reproachful names that have been successively fixed on them, as the mark of general contempt and abhorrence, such as Patarienes, Lollards, Huguenots, Gospellers, Puritans, Pietists, &c.

These particulars will be illustrated in the course of our history, not exactly in the order here laid down, but as the series of the narration shall require or suggest. I shall not confine myself to a nice uniformity of method, or a dry detail of facts, but shall endeavour to illustrate and apply the several incidents to the use and edification of common readers, and with a view to my primary design, which is, (as I have already said) to vindicate the doctrines of the Reformation, or in other words, the main doctrines taught in the Articles and Homilies of the Church of England, from those unjust and disingenuous invectives, which are every day cast upon them, by not a few who owe all their distinction and authority to their having solemnly engaged to defend them.

Whoever considers the intricacy and variety of ecclesiastical history, and that the best collections of that sort have swelled to a number of folios, will not expect to find every thing that might have deserved a place. The life of man would hardly suffice to furnish a work of this sort in its just extent.

I must content myself with selecting a competent number of the most authentic and interesting topics, from the voluminous materials already published, but which, either from the size or scarceness of the books, or the languages in which they are written, are little more known to the generality of readers, than if they had never appeared in print.

I shall avoid, as far as possible, interfering in the controversies on church-government; reserving to myself, and willingly leaving to others, the rights of private judgment, the just privilege of Christians, Protestants, and Britons.

It must be confessed, that the bulk of ecclesiastical history, as it is generally understood, is little more than a history of what the passions, prejudices, and interested views of men, have prompted them to perpetrate, under the pretext and sanction of religion. Enough has been written in this way; curiosity, nay, malice itself, need desire no more. I propose to open a more pleasing prospect; to point out, by a long succession of witnesses, the native tendency, and proper influence of the religion of Jesus; to produce the concurring suffrage of different ages, people, and languages, in favour of what the wisdom of the world rejects and revilcs; to bring unanswerable proofs, that the doctrine of grace is a doctrine according to godliness; that the constraining love of Christ is the most powerful motive to obedience; that it is the property of true faith to overcome the world; and that the true church and people of Christ have endured his cross in every age. The enemy has thrust sore at them that they might fall, but the Lord has been their refuge and support; they are placed upon a rock that cannot be shaken; they are kept (φρουρουμενοι,) guarded and garrisoned by the power of God; and therefore the gates of hell have not, cannot, shall not, prevail against them.

Per damna, per cædes, ab ipso
Ducit opes animumque ferro.

Olney, November, 1769.

*** A REVIEW of Ecclesiastical History, upon the plan proposed in this Introduction, was a subject the Author had very much at heart; so much so, that he had begun to prepare materials, and entered some little way upon it, several years before his admission into

the ministry. From the extent, however, and unforeseen difficulties of the undertaking, as well as from the many interruptions he met with in the discharge of his professional duties, and the occasional occurrences of every day, he had proceeded only the length of the two first Books, when he relinquished his design, and afterwards laid it entirely aside. However much the prosecution of this subject might have been wished, either by his friends or the public at large, it is presumed the omission will be the more readily excused, when it is considered, that the observations made with respect to the first century, seem to have been originally intended, and with very little variation will be found, to apply to every succeeding period.

A

REVIEW

OF

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.

BOOK I.

ON THE FIRST PERIOD OF CHRISTIANITY.

CHAPTER I.

The Wisdom and Goodness of God conspicuous in the Period assigned for Christ's Appearance. Illustrated by a Summary View of the State of Mankind, before and at the time of his birth.

When the first man had fallen from the happiness and perfection of his creation, had rendered himself corrupt and miserable, and was only capable of transmitting depravity and misery to his posterity, the goodness of God immediately revealed a remedy adequate to his distressed situation. The Lord Jesus was promised under the character of the seed of the woman, as the great deliverer, who should repair the breach of sin, and retrieve the ruin of human nature. From that hour he became the object of faith, and the author of salvation, to every soul that aspired to communion with God, and earnestly sought deliverance from guilt and wrath. This discovery of a Saviour was, in the first ages, veiled under types and shadows; and, like the advancing day, became brighter and brighter, as the time of his manifestation drew near: but it was always sufficient to sustain the hopes, and to purify the hearts of the true worshippers of God. That the patriarchs and prophets of old were, in this sense, Christians, that is to say, that their joy and trust centred in the promised Messiah, and that the faith, whereby they overcame the world, was the same faith in the same Lord with ours, is unanswerably proved by St. Paul in several passages (Rom. iv.; Gal. iii. 16, 17;) particularly in Heb. xi., where he at large insists on the characters of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Moses, to illustrate this very point.

At length, in the fulness of time, as the apostle speaks, (Gal. iv. 4,) the time marked out by the ancient prophecies, the time to which all the previous dispensations of Divine Providence had an express reference and subordination, and which was peculiarly suited to place the manifold wisdom of God, and the truths of divine revelation, in the clearest light; the long-expected Messiah appeared as the surety and Saviour of sinners, to accomplish the great work of redemption. For these purposes, he was born of a virgin of the family of David, at the town of Bethlehem, as the prophets had foretold. This great event took place in the twenty-seventh year of the reign of Augustus Cæsar, computing from the battle of Actium; and, according to the most received authorities,* almost 1920 years from the calling of Abraham, and about 4000 from the creation.

The pride and vanity of man, which prompt him to cavil with his Maker, and to dispute when he ought to obey, have often objected to the expedience and propriety of this appointment. It has been asked, If Christ's appearance was so absolutely necessary, why was it so long deferred? Or, if mankind could do without him for so many thousand years, why not longer, or for ever? In attempting a solution of this difficulty, some well-meaning persons, from a too earnest desire to render the counsels of God more acceptable to the narrow apprehensions of unsanctified reason, have given up the ground they ought to have maintained, and made such conces-

* Bossuet, Univ. Hist. Prideaux, Connect.

sions, as (if extended to their just consequence) would amount to all that the most hardened infidel can desire. The most direct and proper answer is suggested by St. Paul (Rom. ix. 20,) on a similar occasion, Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God ?* That the will and wisdom of the Creator should direct and limit the inquiries of his rational creatures, is a principle highly consonant to right reason itself. And there can hardly be a stronger proof of human depravity, than that this argument is so generally esteemed inconclusive. But waving this, a sufficient answer may be made from the premises already advanced.

God was not a debtor to sinful men. He might have left them all to perish, as he left the sinning angels, without the least impeachment of his goodness; but his mercy interposed, and he spared not his own Son, that sinners might be saved in a way consistent with his perfections. But though, in compassion to us, he provided the means of salvation, we cannot wonder that, in justice to himself, he laid the plan in such a manner as might most clearly illustrate the riches of his own grace, and most effectually humble and silence the pardoned offenders, to prevent their boasting and trusting in themselves, and to give them the most affecting views of his unmerited goodness. We may therefore humbly conceive one reason why Christ was no sooner manifested in the flesh, to have been, that the nature, effects, and inveteracy of sin, might be more evidently known, and the insufficiency of every other means of relief demonstrated by the universal experience of many ages.

What is the history of mankind but a diffusive exemplification of the scripture-doctrines concerning the dreadful nature and effects of sin, and the desperate wickedness of the heart of man? We are accustomed from our infancy to call evil good and good evil. We acquire an early prejudice in favour of heroes, conquerors, and philosophers. But if we consider the facts recorded in the annals of antiquity, divested from the false glare and studied ornaments with which the vanity of writers has disguised them, they will afford but a dark and melancholy review. The spirit of the first-born Cain appears to have influenced the whole human race. The peace of nations, cities, and families has been continually disturbed by the bitter effects of ambition, avarice, revenge, cruelty, and lust. The general knowledge of God was soon lost out of the world; and when his fear was set aside, the restraints, dictated by the interests of civil society, were always too weak to prevent the most horrid evils. In a word, the character of all ages and countries before the coming of Christ (a few excepted, where the light of revelation was afforded) is strongly, though briefly, drawn by St. Paul:—*Foolish* and infatuated to the highest degree, *disobedient* to the plainest dictates of nature, reason, and conscience, *enslaved** *to divers* dishonourable *lusts and pleasures*, *living in malice and envy*, *hateful* and abominable in themselves, and incessantly *hating* and worrying one another, Titus iii. 3.

It would be more easy than pleasant to make out this charge by a long induction of particulars; and, without having recourse to the most savage and uncultivated, the proof might be rested on the character of the two most celebrated and civilized nations, and at the time of their greatest refinement, the Greeks and the Romans. St. Paul (Rom. i. 21—32,) has given us the result of their boasted improvements in arts and sciences, in war and commerce, in philosophy and literature; and he says no more than is abundantly confirmed by their own poets and historians.† Notwithstanding the marks and fruits of fine taste and exalted genius which were found amongst them, they were habitually abandoned to the grossest vices. Devoted to the most stupid *idolatry*, they worshipped the works of their own hands, nay, erected altars to their follies and passions. Their moral characters were answerable to their principles. Without *natural affection*, they frequently exposed their helpless infants to perish. They burned with *lusts*, not to be named without horror, and this not the meaner sort only, or in secret, but some of their finest spirits and most admired writers‡ were sunk so low as to glory in their shame, and openly avow themselves the disgrace of humanity. In their public concerns, notwithstanding their specious pretences, they were *covenant-breakers*, *implacable*, *unmerciful*, and *unjust*. Guilty of the severest oppression, while they boasted highly of equity and moderation,§ as was particularly manifested on the destruction of Carthage

* It is observable in this passage, that the apostle foresees and states the great objection which would be made to his doctrine, but does not attempt to answer it any farther, than by referring all to the will of him who formed the whole mass, and has a right to dispose of it. Had succeeding writers and teachers imitated his example, declared the plain truth in plain words, and avoided vain and endless reasonings, how many offences would have been prevented!

* *Enslaved.* So the original term may be emphatically rendered—At the controul of various and opposite passions, hurried about by them all in their turns, and incapable of resisting or refusing the motions of any.

† An affecting comment on this passage might be collected from Horace, Juvenal, Sallust, and Suetonius.

‡ See Virgil, Eclog. 2.

§ See Acts xxvii. 42. The soldiers would have killed all the prisoners, right or wrong, rather than one of them should have a possibility of escaping; and in this, without doubt, they consulted their own safety, and the spirit of their laws. Why, then, were the Romans so much admired? Could there be a greater proof of cruelty and injustice found amongst the most barbarous nations, than to leave prisoners, who might possibly be innocent, exposed to the wanton caprice of their keepers?

and Corinth; two memorable instances of the spirit of a government so undeservedly admired in after times. And as the Roman power, so the Grecian eloquence, was perverted to the worst purposes,—to palliate crimes, to consecrate folly, and to recommend falsehood under the guise and semblance of truth.

Such was the character of the people reputed the wisest and the best of the heathens, and particularly so at the birth of Christ, when the Roman empire was at the summit of authority and splendour. A long experience had shown the general depravity to be not only inveterate, but incurable. For during several preceding ages, a reformation had been desired and attempted. The principal leaders in this commendable design were called philosophers, and many of their writings are still extant. It must be acknowledged that some of them had a faint view of several important truths; but as they neither knew the cause and extent of the disorder, nor the only effectual remedy, they met with little success. Their schemes were various, inconsistent, and even opposite, and each party more successful in opposing the fallacy of other sects than in maintaining their own. Those who came nearest the truth, and were in earnest to promote it, were very few. Even these were ignorant of some things absolutely necessary to the attainment of the desired end. The best of them were restrained by the fear of men and a regard to established customs. What they could and did propound, they had no sufficient authority or influence to impress upon the consciences of men. And if, in a few instances, they seemed to succeed, the advantage was only imaginary. Where they prevailed on any to relinquish intemperance, they made them full amends by gratifying their pride. The business passed from hand to hand, from sect to sect, but all to no purpose. After innumerable disputations, and volumes concerning the supreme good, the beauty of virtue, the fitness of things, and other high-sounding topics, they left matters as bad or worse than they found them. They could not effectually inculcate their doctrine upon a single village or family. Nay, they were but half persuaded themselves, and could not act up to their own principles,* when they most needed their support.

A still more affecting view of the degeneracy of human nature we have in the history of the Israelites, whom God was pleased to set apart from the rest of mankind, for several important purposes. He revealed himself to this people when they were groaning under a heavy bondage in Egypt, from which they had neither spirit nor power to deliver themselves; he freed them from their captivity by a series of illustrious miracles; he led them through the sea and the desert; he honoured them with the symbols of his immediate presence; was a wall of fire round about them, and a glory in the midst of them; he spoke to them with an audible voice, and fed them with manna from heaven; he put them in possession of a good land, and fought against all their enemies. Might it not have been expected that a people so highly favoured and honoured, should have been obedient and thankful! Some of them were so; his grace always preserved a spiritual people amongst them, whose faith in the Messiah taught them the true meaning of the Levitical law, and inspired them with zeal and sincerity in the service of God. But the bulk of the nation was always refractory and disobedient. While in the wilderness they murmured against the Lord upon every new difficulty. Within a few days after the law had been delivered in flames and thunder from the top of Sinai, they formed a molten calf to worship, and would have made a captain who might lead them back to Egypt. They despised the good land, therefore their carcases fell* in the wilderness, 1 Cor. x. 5. Their posterity retained the same spirit; they learned the ways of the Heathen, whom the Lord cast out before them; they adopted every idolatrous practice; they transgressed every divine command. During a long succession of warnings, chastisements, and deliverances, they became worse and worse, so that, in Jeremiah's time, they equalled or exceeded the Heathens around them in ignorance and wickedness. They mocked the messengers of God, despised his words, and misused his prophets, till his wrath rose against them, and there was no remedy. At length their land was laid waste, Jerusalem burnt, the greater part of the people destroyed, and the remainder carried captives into Chaldea.

Upon their return from captivity, they seemed for a little while to retain a sense of their duty and of the judgments they had suffered. But all was soon forgot. Their wickedness now put on a new form, and discovered the evil of the heart of man in a new point of view. They were no longer prone to idolatry. They avoided the most distant appearance of it with scrupulous exactness, and professed the highest attachment to God. They boasted themselves in his law; and,

* Witness the prevarication of Socrates, and the irresolution of Cicero, towards the close of their lives.

* They were overthrown (κατεστρωθησαν,) they fell in heaps, like grass before the scythe, in the wilderness; and this, after all the great things they had seen and been partakers of. Of the many hundred thousands who were above twenty years old when they were delivered from Egypt, only two persons were spared to enter the promised land; a striking admonition to us not to rest in the participation of external privileges of any kind, for these people had seen the Lord's wonders at the Red-Sea, had rejoiced in the destruction of the Egyptians, and been fed with manna from heaven.

from a presumption that they were his peculiar people, they despised and hated the rest of mankind. It is not our present concern closely to follow their history. Let it suffice to say that, by substituting a regard to the letter of the law in the place of spiritual obedience, and by presuming to multiply their own inventions and traditions,* and to hold them no less binding than the positive commands of God; they, by degrees, attained to a pitch of impiety unknown to former times, and which was so much the more offensive and abominable, as it was covered with the mask of religion, and accompanied with a claim to superior sanctity.

Pride, hypocrisy, and interest, divided them into sects; and the contests of each party for superiority threw the state into frequent commotions. Their intrigues at length brought upon them the Roman power. The city was taken by Pompey; and though they afterwards retained a shadow of liberty, their government was determined from that time by the will of the conquerors. At length Herod, a foreigner, obtained it. In his reign Christ was born.

Thus the state of mankind, before the coming of Christ, proved, with the fullest evidence, the necessity of his interposition. And, in the mean time, the world had not been left utterly helpless and hopeless. His future advent had been revealed from the beginning; and by faith in that revelation a remnant had subsisted in every age, who had triumphed over the general evil, and maintained the cause of God and truth. It was not necessary to the salvation of these, that he should have been manifested sooner; for they beheld his day afar off, and rejoiced in his name. With respect to others, destitute of divine faith, his incarnation would have had the same effect at any period as it had on multitudes who actually saw him in the flesh, but, offended with the meanness of his circumstances, and the great honours he vindicated to himself, rejected him with disdain.

But farther, the late appearance of Christ in the world gave room for the full accomplishment of the prophecies concerning him, which had been repeated at different times, with increasing clearness and precision; insomuch that the time, place, and every circumstance of his birth, life, and death, had been distinctly foretold. Thus the truth and authority of the Old Testament were confirmed, and the wisdom, power, and providence of God, overruling and directing the contingencies of human affairs, to produce this grand event in its determinate period, were displayed to the highest advantage. And as the state of the moral world made his presence highly necessary, so God, in due time, disposed the political state of mankind in such a manner as to prepare the way for a speedy and general publication of the gospel through the world.

It would be pleasing to consider how the rise and fall and change of empires were made successively subservient to introduce the kingdom of Jesus. But this would lead me beyond my present bounds. I can only just hint at two or three events, which had a more general influence. The first is, The rapid progress of Alexander, whose extensive conquests, divided amongst his successors, laid the foundation of four powerful monarchies, and opened an intercourse between countries till then unknown to each other. By this means the Greek tongue became familiar and common to many nations; and, soon after, the Hebrew scriptures were translated into that language, and the prophecies concerning the Messiah were laid open to the Gentiles. To this may be added the several dispersions of the Jews, who, upon various occasions, had been settled in almost every considerable city under the heathen governments. By their traditions and prophecies, imperfectly understood, a general expectation had been raised of some extraordinary deliverer, who would shortly appear. Lastly, by the growth of the Roman empire, many nations and people, who were before acquainted by means of one common language, became more closely united under one dominion. Every province had a necessary connection with Rome, and Rome was the centre and resort of the greatest part of the then habitable world.

As to the Jews, many things concurred to animate their wishes and expectations of the Messiah's approach. The prophecies were in their hands. Many of their wise men were apprised, that the term of seventy weeks, spoken of by Daniel, was drawing to a period. The sceptre seemed departing from Judah: they groaned under a foreign yoke, from which they vainly imagined the Messiah would set them free, and give them, in their turn, a temporal dominion over the nations of the earth. Though this mistake prompted them to reject Christ, when he preached a deliverance unsuitable to their worldly notions, yet it made them solicitous and eager for the appearance of the person on whom their hopes were fixed. A few amongst them, however, better instructed in the true meaning of the prophecies, were secretly waiting in the exercises of faith and

* See one instance, Matt. xv. 5. The expression is rather obscure, but the sense is: "What you might expect from me for your support, I have put out of my own power; it is devoted to the service of God and the temple." And teachers allowed this to be a legal exemption. Any man who would pay handsomely to the priests and the temple, might treat his parents as he pleased. Thus they set aside the express command of God, by their own authority, and for their own advantage. The same dispensing, commuting, engrossing spirit has too often appeared in the Christian church.

prayer for the consolation of Israel, Luke ii. 3.

From this general view of the moral and political state of mankind, and the leading designs of divine revelation and providence, previous to the birth of Christ, we may conclude, that the time fixed on from before the foundation of the world, for his actual exhibition amongst men, was not an arbitrary, but a wise and gracious appointment; a determination admirably suited to place the most important truths in the strongest light. In this way the depravity, misery, and helplessness of man, the mercy of God, and the truth of the scriptures, were unquestionably proved to all succeeding times. The necessity of a Saviour was felt and acknowledged; and the suitableness, all-sufficiency, and condescension of Jesus, when he undertook and accomplished the great designs in which his love engaged him, were more strongly illustrated by the preceding contrast. He knew the whole human race were sinners, rebels, enemies against God. He knew the terms, the price of our redemption, that he must obey, suffer, weep, and die. Yet he came. He emptied himself of his glory and honour, and took on him the form of a servant, to bring the glad tidings of salvation to men. In effect, the gospel of Christ soon appeared to be the great *desideratum*, and completely redressed the evils which philosophy had given up as desperate. The genius and characteristic marks of this gospel will be considered in the following chapter.

CHAPTER II.

The Character and Genius of the Gospel, as taught and exemplified by Christ.

A SUCCINCT history of the life of our Lord and Saviour is no part of our plan. This the inspired evangelists have performed with the highest advantage and authority; and their writings (through the mercy of God) are generally known and read in our own tongue. It will be sufficient for me to select a few passages from them, to explain and confirm the several points I have proposed to treat of in this book, as principles whereon to ground our observations on the spirit and conduct of aftertimes.

At present I propose to state the true character and genius of his doctrine. This may seem a digression from my main design. But as I shall often have occasion to speak of the gospel, and the opposition it has met with, it will not be improper, in the first place, to exhibit a general idea of what we mean by the gospel, especially as the professed followers of Christ have been, and still are, not a little divided upon the point.

We may describe the gospel to be—"A divine revelation in the person of Jesus Christ, discovering the misery of fallen man by sin, and the means of his complete recovery by the free grace of God, through faith, unto holiness and happiness." The explanation and proof of these particulars, from our Lord's express declarations, and the tenor of his conduct, will sufficiently point out the principal marks and characters of his gospel. But, before we enter upon this, two things may be premised.

1. Though I confine myself to the writings of the evangelists in this disquisition, yet it should be remembered, that whilst our Lord was visibly conversant with men, he did not ordinarily discover the whole system of his doctrine in express terms. He spoke to the multitude, for the most part, in parables, (Matt. xiii. 10, 11,) and was not forward to proclaim himself the Messiah upon every occasion, Matt. xvi. 20. And even in his more intimate discourses with his disciples (John xvi. 12—25,) he taught them with a wise and gracious accommodation to their circumstances and weakness.* The full explanation of many things he referred to the time when, having accomplished his wish, and returned victorious and triumphant into heaven, he should send down, according to his promise, the Holy Spirit, to enlighten and comfort his people. Then, and not before, they fully understood the meaning of all they had seen and heard while he was with them, Mark ix. 10; John ii. 22.

2. The doctrine of the gospel is not like a mathematical problem, which conveys precisely the same degree of truth and certainty to every one that understands the terms. If so, all believers would be equally enlightened, who enjoy the common privilege of the written word. But there is, in fact, an amazing variety in this respect. Where this doctrine is truly understood, though in the lowest degree, it inspires the soul with a supreme love to Jesus, and a trust in him for salvation. And those who understand it best, have not yet received all the evidence, comfort, and influence from it, which it is capable of affording. The riches of grace and wisdom in this dispensation are unsearchable (Eph. iii. 8,) and immense, imparted in different measures, and increased from time to time, according to the good pleasure (1 Cor. xii. 11,) of the Spirit of God, who furnishes his people with light and strength propor-

* Our Lord taught his disciples gradually; their knowledge advanced as the light, or (according to his own beautiful simile) first the blade, then the ear; first green corn, then fully ripe. He considered their difficulties, he made allowances for their infirmities. It is to be wished his example was followed by all who teach in his name. Some are so hasty, they expect to teach to others, in one discourse or interview, all that they have attained themselves by the study and experience of many years.

tioned to their exigenees, situation, and the services or trials he ealls them to; not without respect to the degree of their diligence, obedience, and simplicity, in waiting upon him. For these reasons, it is not to be expected, that every one who serves God with his spirit in the gospel of his Son, should have exaetly the same views of this sublime subject. Neither do I presume to think myself capable of displaying it in its full light and beauty. I desire, therefore, to write with eandour, and entreat a candid perusal, as conscious of my infirmities, and the imperfections necessarily attending the human mind, in this present state of things. Yet I am not afraid to express my just confidence, that I shall advance no prineiple, as a part of the gospel-doctrine, whieh does not assuredly belong to it.

I now proceed to explain and confirm the definition I have given of the gospel.

1. It is a divine revelation, a discovery of truths, which, though of the highest moment, could have been known no other way. That God will forgive sin, is beyond the power of unassisted reason to prove. The prevailing custom of sacrifices, is indeed founded upon such a hope; but this praetiee was, without doubt, derived from revelation, for reason could not have suggested such an expedient. And those among the Heathens, whether priests or philosophers, who spoke of forgiveness of sin, knew but little what sin was. Revelation was needful to discover sin, in its true nature and demerit; and where this is known, the awakened and wounded conseience is not easily persuaded, that a just and holy God will pardon iniquity; so likewise the immortality of the soul, after all the fine things said upon the subject, remained a problematieal point among the Heathens. Their best arguments, though conclusive to us, were not so to themselves. When they laid aside their books, and returned to the common affairs of life, they forgot the force of their own demonstrations.* But the gospel of Christ is an express, complete, and infallible revelation, as he himself often assured his hearers, John vii. 16, and viii. 26.

And as the subject-matter of the gospel contained in the New Testament is a revelation from God, so it is only by a divine revelation, that what is there read or heard, can be truly understood. This is an offensive assertion, but must not be omitted when the question is concerning the marks and characters of Christ's doctrine. Thus when Peter made that noble confession, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God," our Lord answers, "Blessed art thou Simon, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this to thee, but my Father which is in heaven," Matt. xvi. 16, 17. If Peter could read, and had the scriptures to peruse, these were advantages derived from flesh and blood, from his birth, parents, and teachers; advantages which the Scribes and Pharisees, our Lord's most inveterate enemies, enjoyed in common with him. The differenee lay in a revelation of the truth to his heart. As it is said in another place, "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes."*

2. It is a revelation in the person of Jesus Christ. As a revelation, it stands distinguished from all false religions; and as revealed in the person of Jesus, it is distinguished from all former dispensations of the true God, who, in time past, had spoken by the prophets, but was pleased in those last days to speak unto us by his Son. The law was given by Moses, both to enforce the necessity of a universal sinless obedience, and to point out the effieacy of a better Mediator; but graee and truth, graee answerable to the sinner's guilt and misery, and truth, and the full aecomplishment of all its typical serviees, came by Jesus Christ. All the grand peculiarities of the gospel, eentre in this point, the constitution of the person of Christ, Col. ii. 3, 9; John xvii. 3. In the knowledge of him standeth our eternal life. And though our Lord, on some occasions, refused to answer the captious questions of his enemies, and expressed himself so as to leave his hearers in suspense, yet at other times, he clearly asserted his own just rights and honours, and proposed himself as the supreme object of love, trust, and worship, the fountain of graee and power, the resurrection, life, and happiness of all believers.

That he vindieated to himself those characters and prerogatives which incommunicably belong to God, is evident from the texts referred to. He was a judge of the thoughts and intents of the heart, (Matt. ix. 2, 3;) he forgave sins; he adopted the style of Supreme Majesty:† his wonderful works were proof of an almighty power; he restored sight, health, and life, with a word; (Matt. viii. 3, 9, 30; John iv. 53;) he controlled the elements, (Matt. xiv. 25; Mark iv. 39,) and showed himself Lord of quick and dead, angels, and devils, (John xi. 25, 44; Luke

* Cicero frankly confesses this: "Nescio quomodo, dum lego, assentior; cum posui librum, et mecum ipse de immortalitate animorum cœpi cogitare, assentio omnis illa elabiture." Tusc. Qæst. lib. 1.

* That babes should be admitted to this knowledge, and express a certainty, where the wise are all perplexity and darkness, is extremely mortifying to human pride. But are not these the words of Christ? How arrogant, how dangerous, must it be to be displeased with that dispensation at which he rejoiced!

† John viii. 38; xiv. 9. "He that hath seen me hath seen my Father." Which of all the creatures of God dare use these words? God, in the strict sense, is invisible and inaccessible; but he communicates with his creatures, through Christ his Son, without whom he cannot be seen, or known at all. We cannot enjoy any spiritual, clear, and comfortable views of God, unless our thoughts fix upon the Man Christ Jesus; he is the door and the vail to the holy of holies; and there is no coming to the Father by any other way.

iv. 34; Matt. iv. 11, 26, 53;) and both his enemies and his friends understood his claim. The Jews attempted to stone him for making himself equal to God (John v. 18; x. 33;) and he received from Thomas the most express and solemn ascription of deity that can be offered from a creature to his Creator, John xx. 28.

Yet all this glory was veiled. The Word was made flesh: he assumed the human nature, and shared in all its infirmities, sin excepted. He was born of a woman; he passed through the states of infancy, childhood, and youth, and gradually increased in wisdom and stature, Luke ii. 52. He was often, yea, always afflicted; he endured hunger, thirst, and weariness; (Mark xi. 12; John iv. 6, 7;) he sighed, he wept, he groaned, he bled, he died; (Mark vii. 34; John xi. 35, 38; Luke xxii. 44;) but, amidst all, he was spotless and undefiled. He repelled the temptations of Satan, (Matt. iv. 1, 10;) he appealed to his most watchful enemies for his integrity; he rendered universal, unceasing obedience to the will of God, and completely fulfilled the whole law, John viii. 46; xiv. 30; xvii. 4. In him the perfection of wisdom and goodness shined forth. He burned with love to God, with compassion to men; a compassion which he freely extended to the most necessitous, and the most unworthy. He returned good for evil, wept for his enemies, (Luke xix. 41,) prayed for his murderers, Luke xxiii. 34. Such was his character, a divine person in the human nature, God manifest in the flesh, 1 Tim. iii. 16. And from this union, all he did, and all he said, derived a dignity, authority, and efficacy, which rendered him every way worthy to be the Teacher, Exemplar, Lord, and Saviour of mankind.

3. In the person and sufferings of Christ, there is at once a discovery of the misery of fallen man, and the means of his complete recovery. It has already been observed, that the full explication of these truths was deferred till after his resurrection; and the subsequent writings of his apostles are useful to give us a complete view of the cause, design, and benefits of his passion. At present we confine ourselves to his own words. He frequently taught the necessity and certainty of his sufferings, (Matt. xvi. 21; xx. 28;) he spoke of them as the great design of his incarnation, that it was by this means he should draw all unto himself, (John xii. 32; x. 17;) that he was, on this account, especially, the object of his Father's complacency, because he voluntarily substituted himself to die for his people. He enforced the necessity of believing on him in this view, (John iii. 14—18;) and applied to himself the prophecies of the Old Testament, (Luke xxiv. 25—27; Isa. liii.) which speak to the same purpose. Isaiah had foretold, that the Lord would lay upon him the iniquities of us all; that he was to be wounded for our transgressions, and by his stripes we should be healed. Here then we see the manifold wisdom of God; his inexpressible love to us commended, his mercy exalted, in the salvation of sinners; his truth and justice vindicated, in the full satisfaction for sin exacted from the Surety; his glorious holiness, and opposition to all evil; and his invariable faithfulness to his threatenings and his promises. Considered in this light, our Saviour's passion is the most momentous, instructive, and comfortable theme that can affect the heart of man. But if his substitution and proper atonement are denied, the whole is unintelligible. We can assign no sufficient reason why a person of his excellence was abandoned to such miseries and indignities: nor can we account for that agony and distress which seized him at the prospect of what was coming upon him. It would be highly injurious to his character to suppose he was thus terrified by the apprehension of death or bodily pain, when so many frail and sinful men have encountered death, armed with the severest tortures, with far less emotion.

Here, as in a glass, we see the evil of sin, and the misery of man. The greatness of the disorder may be rationally inferred from the greatness of the means necessary to remove it. Would we learn the depth of the fall of man, let us consider the depth of the humiliation of Jesus to restore him. Behold the beloved of God, perfectly spotless and holy, yet made an example of the severest vengeance; prostrate and agonizing in the garden; enduring the vilest insults from wicked men; torn with whips, and nails, and thorns; suspended naked, wounded, and bleeding upon the cross, and there heavily complaining that God had, for a season, forsaken him. Sin was the cause of all his anguish. He stood in the place of sinners; and therefore was not spared. Not any, or all the evils which the world has known, afford such proof of the dreadful effects, and detestable nature of sin, as the knowledge of Christ crucified. Sin had rendered the case of mankind so utterly desperate, that nothing less than the blood and death of Jesus could retrieve it. If any other expedient could have sufficed, his prayer, that the bitter cup might pass from him, would surely have been answered. But what his enemies intended as the keenest reproach, his redeemed people will for ever repeat as the expression of his highest praise: "He saved others, himself he cannot save," Luke xxiii. 35. Justice would admit no inferior atonement: love would not give up the cause of fallen ruined man. Being therefore determined to save others, he could not, consistently with this gracious design and undertaking, deliver himself.

Again, the means and certainty of a salvation proportioned to the guilt and misery of sinners, and a happiness answerable to the utmost capacity of the soul of man, are revealed in the same astonishing dispensation of divine love. When Jesus was baptized, he was pointed out by a voice from heaven: "This is my beloved Son, in whom (or for whose sake) I am well pleased," Matt. iii. 17. He afterwards proclaimed his own authority and sufficiency, that all things were delivered into his hands, and invited every weary, heavy-laden soul to seek to him for refreshment and peace, Matt. xi. 27—29. He gave the most express assurances that whoever applied to him should in no case be rejected, John vi. 37. He mentioned his death and sufferings (John xii. 32, 33,) as the principal circumstance that should engage the hearts, and confirm the hopes of sinners. He gave repeated promises, that those who believe in him shall never perish, (John x. 38;) that neither force nor fraud should frustrate his intentions in their favour; that after his ascension, he would send the Holy Spirit (John xvi. 7, 13, 14,) to supply his bodily presence; and that his power, grace, and providence, should be with his people to the end of the world, (Matt. xxviii. 20:) finally, that he would manage their concerns in heaven, (John xiv. 3, 13, 14,) and at length return to take them to himself, that they might be with him for ever; to behold, and to share his glory.

4. In this revelation, God has illustriously displayed the glory of his free grace. The miserable and guilty, who find themselves without either plea or hope, but what the gospel proclaims by Christ, are invited without exception, and received without condition. Though they have been the vilest offenders, they are freely accepted in the Beloved; and none of their iniquities shall be remembered any more; on the contrary, the most respectable characters amongst men are declared to be of no avail in point of acceptance with God; but, in this respect, all the race of Adam are upon equal terms, and must be involved in the same ruin, without an absolute dependence on the great Mediator. This is an illustrious peculiarity of the gospel, which the proud fallen nature of man cannot but resist and find fault with, till the conscience is truly affected with the guilt and demerit of sin. The whole tenor of our Saviour's ministry was suited to depreciate the most specious attainments of those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and to encourage all who felt and confessed themselves to be miserable sinners: *Parcere subjectis, et debellare superbos.* This was a chief cause of the opposition he met with in his own person, and has awakened the hatred and dislike of the bulk of mankind against his doctrine ever since. It is necessary, therefore, to confirm it by proofs which cannot be evaded by any who profess to acknowledge him to be a teacher sent from God.

He was daily conversant with many who were wise and righteous in their own eyes; and we find he omits no opportunity to expose and condemn their pretensions. He spake one parable purposely to persons of this stamp, (Luke xviii. 9—14,) and describes a Pharisee boasting of his observance of the law: He paid tithes, he fasted, he prayed; he was not chargeable with adultery or extortion; he could say more for himself than many can who affect to be thought religious; but the poor publican (though despicable in his sight,) who, conscious of his unworthiness, durst not lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, and cried for mercy, was in a happier and safer condition than the other with all his boasted obedience.

Another remarkable instance is that of the ruler (Matt. xix. 16, Luke xviii. 18,) who accosted our Lord in a respectful manner, asking him, What he should do to inherit eternal life? His address was becoming: his inquiry seemed sincere; and the character he gave of himself was such as men, who see not the heart, might have judged exemplary and praise-worthy. When our Lord referred him to the precepts of the law, he answered that he had kept them all from his youth. Yet one thing, we read, was wanting. What could this one thing be, which rendered so fair a character of no value! We may collect it from the event. He wanted a deep sense of his need of a Saviour. If he had been possessed of this one thing, he would willingly have relinquished all to follow Jesus. But, ignorant of the spirituality of the law, he trusted to a defective obedience: and the love of the world prevailing in his heart, he chose rather to part with Christ than with his possessions.

On the other hand, how readily our Lord received sinners, notorious sinners, who were vile to a proverb, appears from the remarkable account given by St. Luke (chap. vii. 37,) of a woman whose character had been so infamous, that the Pharisee wondered that Jesus could permit her to touch him. But though a great sinner, she found great forgiveness; therefore she loved much, and wept much.* She had nothing to say for herself; but Jesus espoused her cause, and pronounced her pardon. He likewise silenced the proud caviller by a parable, that sweetly illustrates the freeness and genuine effect of the grace of God, which can only be possessed or prized by those who see they must perish without it.

* She washed his feet with tears; ἤρξατο βρέχειν, she began to rain tears upon his feet: her head was waters, and her eyes fountains: to receive a free pardon of many sins, a pardon bought with blood,—it is this causes the heart to melt, and the eyes to flow.

And this was the general effect of his preaching. Publicans and sinners thronged to hear him, received his doctrine, and found rest for their souls. As this discrimination gave a general offence, he took occasion to deliver the parable of the prodigal, (Luke xv. 11;) in the former part of which he gives a most endearing view of the grace of God, in pardoning and accepting the most undeserving. He afterwards, in the close, shows the pride, stubbornness, and enmity of the self-righteous Pharisees, under the character of the elder brother.* While his language and deportment discovered the disobedience and malice of his heart, he pretended that he had never broke his father's commands. The self-condemned sinner, when he first receives hope of pardon, experiences a joy and peace in believing. This is represented by the feast and fatted calf. But the religious orderly brother had never received so much as a kid: he had found no true comfort in all his formal round of duties; and therefore was exceedingly angry that the prodigal should at once obtain those marks of favour which he, who had remained with his father, had always been a stranger to.

But the capital exemplification of this, and indeed of every doctrine of the gospel, is contained in the account given of the thief upon the cross, (Luke xxiii. 39—42;) a passage which has perhaps been more mistaken and misrepresented by commentators, than any other in the New Testament. The grace of God has shone so bright in this instance, that it has dazzled the eyes even of good men. They have attempted to palliate the offender's crime, or at least to suppose that this was the first fault of the kind he had committed; that perhaps he had been surprised into it, and might, in other respects, have been of a fairer character. They conjecture, that this was the first time he had heard of Jesus; and that there was not only some sort of merit in his faith and confession under these circumstances, but that the death of Jesus happily coinciding with his own, afforded him an advantage peculiar to himself; and that, therefore, this was an exempt case, and not to be drawn into a precedent to after times.

If it was my professed design to comment upon this malefactor's case, I should consider it in a different light. The nature of his punishment, which was seldom inflicted but on those who were judged the most atrocious criminals, makes it more than probable that he did not suffer for a first offence. Nor was he simply a thief. The history of those times abounds with the mischiefs committed by public robbers, who used to join in considerable bands, for rapine and murder, and commit the greatest excesses. In all likelihood, the malefactors crucified with Jesus were of this sort, accomplices and equals in guilt; and therefore judged to die together, receiving (as appears by the criminal's own confession on the cross) the just reward of their deeds.* Here was indeed a fair occasion to show the sovereignty and triumph of grace, contrasted with the most desperate pitch of obdurate wickedness. To show, on the one hand, that the compassion and the power of Christ were not diminished when his sufferings were at the height, and he seemed abandoned to his enemies; and, on the other, the insufficiency of any means to change a sinner's heart, without the powerful efficacy of divine grace. The one malefactor, brought at length to deserved punishment, far from repenting of his crimes, regardless of his immediate appearance before God, thought it some relaxation of his torments, to join with the barbarous multitude in reviling Jesus, who hung upon a cross by his side. He was not ignorant that Jesus was put to death for professing himself the Messiah; but he upbraided him with his character, and treated him as an impostor. In this man we see the progress, wages, and effects of sin. His wickedness brought him to a terrible end, and sealed him up under a fatal hardness of heart; so that he died desperate, though Jesus Christ was crucified before his eyes.† But his companion was impressed by what he saw; his heart relented; he observed the patience of the divine sufferer; he heard him pray for his murderers; he felt himself miserable, and feared the God with whom he had to do. In this distress he received faith to apply to Jesus; and his prayer was granted, and exceeded. He who sent the fair-spoken ruler away sorrowful, answered the first desire of a malefactor at the point of death: "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." This certainly was an instance of free distinguishing grace. Here was salvation bestowed upon one of the vilest sinners, through faith in Jesus, without previous works, or a possibility of performing any. And as such, it is recorded for the en-

* It may be objected to this interpretation, That the father speaks to the elder brother in terms of complacence: "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. But this is not the only place where our Lord addresses the Pharisees in their own style, according to the opinion they conceived of themselves. Thus (Matt. viii. 12,) he says, "The children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness.—He does not mean those who were truly the children of the kingdom, but those who pretended to be so.

* It seems probable, from history, that these were of Barabbas's gang. They had made an insurrection, committed murder, and were, with their ringleader, convicted and condemned. He, in dishonour to Jesus, was spared, whilst these, his accomplices, were executed with him.

† Compare Matt. xxvii. 39. How can it be expected that no more than a constant repetition of Christ's death should be an invincible means of changing the heart, when the actual sight of his sufferings was attended with so little effect! Sin must be felt as the disease and ruin of the soul, and the sufferings of Jesus acknowledged as the only possible remedy, before we can truly sympathize with him, and say, "I am crucified with Christ."

encouragement of all who see themselves destitute of righteousness and strength, and that, like the thief on the cross, they have no refuge or hope, but in the free mercy of God through Christ.

5. The medium by which the gospel becomes the power of God unto salvation, is faith. By faith we do not mean a bare assent, founded upon testimony and rational evidence, that the facts recorded in the New Testament are true. A faith of this sort experience proves to be consistent with a wicked life; whereas the gospel-faith purifies the heart, and overcomes the world. Neither do we mean a confidence of the forgiveness of sin, impressed upon the mind in a sudden and instantaneous manner. Faith is indeed founded upon the strongest evidence, and may often be confirmed by ineffable manifestations from the fountain of light and comfort; but the discriminating property of true faith is, "a reliance upon Jesus Christ for all the ends and purposes for which the gospel reveals him;" such as the pardon of sin, peace of conscience, strength for obedience, and eternal life. It is wrought by the operation of the Holy Spirit, and presupposes a knowledge of him, and of ourselves; of our indigence, and his fulness; our unworthiness, and his merits; our weakness, and his power. The true believer builds upon the person and word of Christ (Matt. vii. 24; xvi. 18) as the foundation of his hope. He enters by him as the only door (John x. 9) to the knowledge, communion, and love of God: he feeds upon him by faith in his heart, with thanksgiving, as the bread of life (John vi. 54—57;) he embraces his righteousness as the wedding-garment (Matt. xxii. 11; Rom. xiii. 14) whereby alone he expects admission to the marriage-feast of heaven: he derives all his strength and comfort from his influence, as the branch from the root (John xv. 4, 5:) he entrusts himself to his care, as the wise and good shepherd of his soul, John x. 14. Sensible of his own ignorance, defects, and his many enemies, he receives Christ as his teacher, priest, and king (John vi. 68;) obeys his preceptor, confides in his mediation, expects and enjoys his powerful protection. In a word, he renounces all confidence in the flesh (Phil. iii. 3,) and rejoices in Christ Jesus as his Saviour; and thus he attains to worship God in spirit and in truth, is supported through all the conflicts and trials of life, possesses a stable peace in the midst of a changing world, goes on from strength to strength, and is at length made more than conqueror, through him that has loved him. This is the life of faith. The degree and exercise of it is various in different persons, and in the same person at different times, as has been already hinted; but the principle itself is universal, permanent, and efficacious in all that truly believe; and nothing less than this faith is sufficient to give any man a right to the name of a Christian.

6. The final cause or great ends of the gospel, respecting man, are holiness and happiness (Matt. i. 21; xxv. 34; John xvii. 24;) the complete restoration of the soul to the favour and image of God, or eternal life begun here, to be consummated in glory. What has been already said renders it needless to enlarge upon this head; nor shall we concern ourselves here to vindicate the doctrine we have laid down from the charge of licentiousness: because it is our professed design, in the progress of this work, to prove, from the history of the church, not only that these principles, when rightly understood, will infallibly produce obedience and submission to the whole will of God, but that these only can do it. Wherever and whenever the doctrines of free grace and justification by faith have prevailed in the Christian church; and according to the degree of clearness with which they have been enforced, the practical duties of christianity have flourished in the same proportion. Wherever they have declined, or been tempered with the reasonings and expedients of men, either from a well meant, though mistaken fear, lest they should be abused, or from a desire to accommodate the gospel, and render it more palatable to the depraved taste of the world, the consequence has always been, an equal declension in practice. So long as the gospel of Christ is maintained without adulteration, it is found sufficient for every valuable purpose; but when the wisdom of man is permitted to add to the perfect work of God, a wide door is opened for innumerable mischiefs:—the divine commands are made void, new inventions are continually taking place, zeal is diverted into a wrong channel, and the greatest stress laid upon things either unnecessary or unwarrantable. Hence perpetual occasion is given for strife, debates, and divisions, till at length the spirit of christianity is forgot, and the power of godliness lost, amidst fierce contentions for the form.

To sum up this inquiry in a few words: the gospel is a wise and gracious dispensation, equally suited to the necessities of man, and to the perfections of God: it proclaims relief to the miserable, and excludes none but those who exclude themselves: it convinces a sinner, that he is unworthy of the smallest mercy, at the same time that it gives him a confidence to expect the greatest; it cuts off all pretence of glorying in the flesh, but it enables a guilty sinner to glory in God: to them that have no might, it increases strength; it gives eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame; subdues the enmity of the heart; shows the nature of sin, the spirituality and sanction of the law, with

the fullest evidence; and, by exhibiting Jesus, as made of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, to all who believe, it makes obedience practicable, easy, and delightful. The constraining love of Christ engages the heart, and every faculty in his service. His example illustrates and recommends his precepts; his presence inspires courage and activity under every pressure; and the prospect of the glory to be revealed is a continual source of joy and peace, which passeth the understanding of the natural man. Thus the gospel filleth the hungry with good things; but it sendeth the rich and self-sufficient empty away, and leaves the impenitent and believing in a state of aggravated guilt and condemnation.

CHAPTER III.

Concerning the true grounds of the opposition our Lord met with in the course of his ministry: and the objections and artifices his enemies employed to prejudice the people against him, and prevent the reception of his doctrine.

If our knowledge of the history of Jesus was confined to the excellence of his character, and the diffusive goodness that shone forth in all his actions, we should hardly conceive it possible, that any people could be so lost to gratitude and humanity as to oppose him. He went about doing good: he raised the dead, healed every disease, and relieved the distresses of all who applied to him, without any difference of cases, characters, or parties, as the sun, with a rich and unwearied profusion, fills every eye with his light. Wisdom flowed from his lips, and his whole conduct was perfect and inculpable. How natural is it to expect, that a person so amiable and benevolent, so blameless and exemplary, should have been universally revered.*

But we find in fact it was far otherwise. Instead of the honours he justly deserved, the returns he met with were reproach, persecution, and death. The wonders of his power and goodness were maliciously ascribed to Satan; he was branded as an impostor, madman, and demoniac; he was made the sport of servants and soldiers; and, at length, publicly executed with every possible circumstance of ignominy and torture, as a malefactor of the worst sort.

What could be the cause and motives of such injurious treatment? This is the subject of our present inquiry. It might indeed be answered very briefly, as it has been, by ascribing it to the peculiar wickedness and perverseness of the Jews. There is not a fallacy more frequent or pleasing to the minds of men, than, while they act contrary to present duty, to please themselves with imagining how well they would have behaved in another situation, or a different age. They think it a mark of virtue to condemn the wickedness of former times, not aware that they themselves are governed by the same spirit. Thus these very Jews spoke highly of the persons of the prophets, while they rejected their testimony, and blamed their forefathers for shedding innocent blood, at the time they were thirsting for the blood of Jesus, Matt. xxiii. 29, 30. It is equally easy at present to condemn the treachery of Judas, the cowardice of Pilate, the blindness of the people, and the malice of the priests, who were all personally concerned in the death of Christ. It is easy to think, that if we had seen his works, and heard his words, we would not have joined with the multitude in crying, Crucify him; though, it is to be feared, many who thus flatter themselves have little less enmity against his person and doctrine than his actual murderers. On this account, I shall give a detail of the true reasons why Christ was opposed in the flesh, and of the measures employed against him, in order to show, that the same grounds of opposition are deeply rooted in the fallen human nature; and how probable it is, that if he was to appear again in the same obscure manner, in any country now called by his name, he would meet with little better treatment, unless when the constitution and laws of a civil government might interpose to prevent it.

But it may be proper, in the first place, briefly to delineate the characters of the sects or parties mentioned by the evangelists, whose leaders, jointly and separately, both from common and distinct motives, opposed our Saviour's ministry, and cavilled at his doctrine. These were the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians.†

The *Pharisees*, including the Scribes (who were chiefly of this sect,) were professedly the guardians of the law, and public teachers of the people. They were held in high veneration by the common people, for the aus-

* The Heathen moralists have supposed that there is something so amiable in virtue, that could it be visible, it would necessarily attract the love and admiration of all beholders. This sentiment has been generally admired; and we need not wonder, since it flatters the pride of man without thwarting his passions. In the Lord Jesus this great *desideratum* was vouchsafed; virtue and goodness were pleased to become visible, were manifest in the flesh. But did the experiment answer to the ideas of the philosophers? Alas! to the reproach of mankind, Jews and Gentiles conspired to treat him with the utmost contempt. They loved darkness, and therefore could not bear the light. They had more compassion and affection for the most infamous malefactor; therefore, when the alternative was proposed to them, they released Barabbas, a robber and a murderer, and nailed Jesus and virtue to the cross.

† See Matt. xxiii; Mark vii. 13; and Luke xviii. 9—14.

terity of their deportment, the frequency of their devotions, and their exactness in the less essential parts of the law. They observed the traditions of the elders, were still adding to them; and the consequence was (as it will always be in such a case,) that they were so pleased with their own inventions, as to prefer them to the positive commands of God; and their studious punctuality in trifles, withdrew their regard from the most important duties. Their specious show of piety was a fair outside, under which the grossest abominations were concealed and indulged. They were full of pride, and a high conceit of their own goodness: they fasted and prayed to be seen and esteemed of men; they expected reverence and homage from all, and challenged the highest titles of respect, to be saluted as doctors and masters, and to be honoured with the principal seats in all assemblies. Many of them made their solemn exterior a cloak for extortion and oppression; and the rest, if not hypocrites in the very worst sense, yet deceived both themselves, and others, by a form of godliness, when they were in effect enslaved by their passions, and lived according to the corrupt rule of their own imaginations.

The *Sadducees*, their antagonists and rivals, were equally, though differently, remote from the true knowledge and worship of God. They not only rejected the tradition of the elders, but a great part of the scriptures likewise; and admitted only the five books of Moses as of divine authority. From this circumstance, together with the difficulty (Matt. xxii. 23) they proposed to our Lord, and the answers he gave them, it appears, that they were persons, who, professing in general terms to acknowledge a revelation from God, yet made their own prejudices and mistakes, under the dignified name of reason, the standard to determine what books should be received as authentic, and in what sense they should be understood. The doctrine of a resurrection did not accord with their notions; therefore they rejected it (Acts xxiii. 8,) together* with those parts of scripture which asserted it most expressly. Their question concerning the seven brethren seems to have been a trite objection, which they had often made, and which had never been answered to satisfaction till our Lord resolved it. But the whole difficulty was founded upon false principles; and when these were removed, all fell to the ground at once. From this, however, we may learn their characteristic; they were the cautious reasoners of those times, who valued themselves on examining every thing closely, refusing to be influenced by the plausible sounds of antiquity and authority.

The *Herodians* (Matt. xxii. 16; Mark iii. 6) were those who endeavoured to ingratiate themselves with Herod. It is most probable that they received their name and distinction, not so much from any peculiar sentiments, as from attempting to accommodate their religion to the circumstances of the times. The Pharisees, boasting of their privileges as the children of Abraham, could hardly brook a foreign yoke; but the Herodians, from motives of interest, were advocates for Herod and the Roman power. Thus they were opposite to the Pharisees in political matters, as the Sadducees were in points of doctrine; and therefore the question concerning tribute was proposed to our Lord jointly by the Pharisees and Herodians, the former designing to render him obnoxious to the people, if he allowed of tribute, the latter to accuse him to the government, if he refused it.

From what has been said, it is evident the leading principles of these sects were not peculiar to themselves. They may rather be considered universally as specimens of the different appearances a religious profession assumes where the heart is not divinely enlightened and converted to the love of the truth. In all such persons, however high the pretence of religion may be carried, it cannot proceed from a nobler principle, or aim at a nobler object than self. These dispositions have appeared in every age and form of the christian church, and are always active to oppose the self-denying doctrines of the gospel upon different pretences. The man, who, fond of his fancied attainments and scrupulous exactness in externals, despises all who will not conform to his rules, and challenges peculiar respect on account of his superior goodness, is a proud *Pharisee*. His zeal is dark, envious, and bitter; his obedience partial and self-willed; and while he boasts of the knowledge of God, his heart rises with enmity at the grace of the gospel, which he boldly charges with opening a door to licentiousness. The modern *Sadducee* (like those of old) admits of a revelation, but then, full of his own wisdom and importance, he arraigns even the revelation he seems to allow at the bar of his narrow judgment; and as the sublime doctrines of truth pass under his review, he affixes without hesitation, the epithets of absurd, inconsistent, and blasphemous to whatever thwarts his pride, prejudice, and ignorance, and those parts of scripture which cannot be warped to speak his sense, he dis-

* That the Sadducees received only the law of Moses, is the general opinion; though I do not say that it has been either indubitably proved, or universally held. That they put their own sense upon the scriptures (whether in whole or in part,) which they did profess to receive, is manifest, from their asserting that there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit. A tenet which contradicts not one or a few texts, but the whole strain and tenor both of the law and the prophets.

cards from his canon as interpolated and suppositious. The *Herodian* is the man, however denominated or dignified, who is governed by interest, as the others by pride, and vainly endeavours to reconcile the incompatible services of God and the world, Christ and Belial. He avoids the excesses of religious parties, speaks in terms of moderation, and is not unwilling to be accounted the pattern and friend of sobriety and religion. He stands fair with all who would be religious upon cheap terms, and fair in his own esteem, having numbers and authority on his side. Thus he almost persuades himself he has carried his point, and that it is not so impossible to serve two masters as our Lord's words seem to import; but the preaching of the pure gospel, which enforces the one thing needful, and will admit of no compliances with worldly interests, interferes with his plan, and incurs his resentment likewise, though, perhaps, he will show his displeasure by more refined and specious methods than the clamorous rage of hot bigotry has patience to wait for.

We now proceed.—The first great cause why Jesus was rejected by those to whom he appealed, may be deduced from the tenor of his doctrine, a summary of which has been given in the former chapter. It offended the pride of the Pharisees, was repugnant to the wise infidelity of the Sadducees, and condemned the pliant temper of the Herodians. The doctrines of free grace, faith, and spiritual obedience were diametrically opposite to their inclinations. They must have parted with all they admired and loved if they had complied with him; but this is a sacrifice too great for any to make who had not deeply felt and known their need of a Saviour. These, on the contrary, were the whole, who saw no want of a physician, and therefore treated his offers with contempt.

Besides, their dislike to his doctrine was increased by his manner of enforcing it. He spoke with authority, and sharply rebuked the hypocrisy, ignorance, ambition, and avarice of those persons who were accounted the wise and the good, who sat in Moses's chair, and had hitherto been heard and obeyed with reverence. But Jesus exposed their true characters: he spoke of them as blind guides; he compared them to painted sepulchres,* and cautioned the people against them, as dangerous deceivers, Matth. xxiii. 27. It is no wonder, therefore, that on this account they hated him with a perfect hatred.

Again, they were exceedingly offended with the high character he assumed as the Son of God, and the Messiah. On this account, they condemned him to die for blasphemy. They expected a Messiah indeed, who they professed was spoken of in the scriptures; but they understood not what the scriptures had revealed, either concerning his divine nature or his voluntary humiliation, that he was to be the Son and Lord of David, yet a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. They denied his divinity, and themselves unwittingly fulfilled the prophecies that spoke of his sufferings; affording, by their conduct, a memorable proof how fatally persons may mistake the sense of the word of God, while they profess highly to esteem it.

What farther increased their contempt of his claims, and contributed to harden their hearts more implacably against him, was the obscurity and poverty of his state. While they were governed by worldly wisdom, and sought not the teaching of God's Spirit, they could not but suppose an utter repugnance between the meanness of his condition and the honours he vindicated to himself. They expected a Messiah to come in pomp and power, to deliver them from the Roman yoke. For a person truly divine, who made himself equal with God, to be encompassed with poverty and distress, seemed such profane contradiction, as might justify every mark of indignity they could offer him. And this difficulty must equally affect every unenlightened mind. If man had been left to devise in what manner the Lord of the universe would probably descend to dwell awhile with poor mortals in a visible form, they would undoubtedly have imagined such a scene, if their thoughts could have reached it, as is described by the prophets on other occasions: the heavens bowing, the earth shaking, the mountains ready to start from their places, and all nature labouring to do homage to her Creator. Or, if he came in a milder way, they would at least have contrived an assemblage of all that we conceive magnificent,—a pomp and splendour surpassing all the world ever saw. Expecting nations crowding to welcome his arrival, and thrones of gold, and palaces of ivory, would have been judged too mean to accommodate so glorious a guest. But the Lord's thoughts and ways are different from man's. The beloved Son of God, by whom all things were made, was born in a stable, and grew up in an obscure and mean condition. He came to suffer and to die for sin, to sanctify poverty and affliction to his people, to set a perfect example of patience and submission; therefore he made himself of no reputation, but took upon him the form and offices of a servant. This was the appointment of divine wisdom; but so incredible in the judgment of blinded mortals, that

* Nothing is more loathsome to our senses than a corpse in the state of putrefaction, or a more striking contrast to the outside of a sumptuous ornamented monument. Perhaps the visible creation does not afford any other image that would so strongly express the true character of hypocrisy, and how hateful it appears in the sight of God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and before whom all things are naked and open.

the apostle assures us, "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord" (1 Cor. xii. 3,) can perceive and acknowledge his inherent excellence and authority, through the disgraceful circumstances of his humiliation, "but by the Holy Ghost." His enemies, therefore, thought they sufficiently refuted his assertions by referring to his supposed parents, and the reputed place of his nativity.

Their envy and hatred were still more inflamed, by observing the character of his followers. These were chiefly poor and illiterate persons, and many of them had been notoriously wicked, or accounted so; publicans and sinners, whose names and professions were vile to a proverb. And for such as these, and almost these only, to acknowledge the person whom they refused, and by professing themselves his disciples (John vii. 49; ix. 34,) to set up for being wiser than their teachers; this was a mortification to their pride, which they could not bear, especially when they found their number daily to increase, and therefore could not but fear their own influence would proportionably decline.

Once more: Mistaking the nature of his kingdom, which he often spoke of, they opposed him from reasons of state. They feared, or pretended to fear, that if they suffered him to go on, the increase of his disciples would give umbrage to the Romans, who would come and take away both their places and their nation, John xi. 49. Some perhaps really had this apprehension; but it was more generally a pretence, which the leaders made use of to alarm the ignorant. They were in truth impatient of the Roman yoke, prone to tumults, and ready to listen to every deceiver who promised them deliverance, under pretence of being their expected Messiah. But from enmity and opposition to Jesus, they became loyal at once. So they might accomplish their designs against him, they were content to forget other grievances, and openly professed, they would have no other king but Cæsar.

These were some of the chief motives which united the opposite interests, and jarring sentiments of the Jewish sects against our blessed Lord. We are next to consider the methods they employed to prejudice the multitudes against him. The bulk of the common people seldom think for themselves in religious concerns, but judge it sufficient to give up their understandings and consciences to their professed teachers.* They are, however, for the most part, more unprejudiced and open to conviction than their guides, whose reputation and interest are more nearly concerned to maintain every established error, and to stop up every avenue by which truth and reformation might enter. The Jewish people, uninfluenced by the proud and selfish views of the priests and rulers, readily honoured the ministry of Christ, and attended him in great multitudes. If they did not enter into the grand design of his mission, they at least gave him testimonies of respect. When Jesus caused (Matth. xv. 31; Luke vii. 16) the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see, they glorified the God of Israel, saying, "A great prophet is risen up amongst us, God has visited his people." Now, what was to be done in this case? would the Scribes and Pharisees stand unconcerned? No; it is said in several places, they were filled with indignation,† and essayed every means to bring his person and miracles into disrepute. The methods they used are worthy of notice, having been often repeated since (as to their substance) against the servants of Christ.

1. They availed themselves of a popular mistake concerning his birth. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, according to the scriptures; but being removed from thence in his infancy to avoid Herod's cruelty, and his parents afterwards living at Nazareth in Galilee, he was supposed by many, to have been born there. Even Nathaniel was prejudiced by this mistake, but happily yielded to Philip's advice to examine for himself. But it prevented many from inquiring much about Jesus, and therefore his enemies made the most of it, and confidently appealed to the scripture, when it seemed to decide in their favour. Search and look (John vii. 42. 52) for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet. It is probable many were staggered with this objection, and thought it sufficient to invalidate all his discourses and miracles; since, let him say and do what he would, he could not possibly be the Messiah, if he was born in Galilee.

2. They urged, that he could not be of God, because he infringed the law of Moses, and broke the Sabbath, John ix. 16. This, though it may seem a groundless objection to us, was not so to many at that time, who knew not the spiritual design and meaning of the law, and perhaps had not the opportunity to hear our Lord vindicate himself. They urged this vehemently against the force of a notorious miracle, and not without some colour, from the words of Moses himself (Deut. xiii. 2) who had warned them to beware of false teachers, though they should confirm their doctrine by signs and wonders.

3. They reproached the freedom of his

* This is much to be lamented; for if the blind lead the blind, shall they not both fall into the ditch? Matth. xv. 14. When the blind lead the blind, how indeed can it be otherwise, if the former imagine they *see*, and the latter are content to be *led!* Alas for the people that are in such a case! alas for their guides

† It is a strong symptom of hypocrisy and enmity to the gospel, to be offended with any new and remarkable displays of divine grace.

conversation. Jesus was of easy access, and condescended to converse and eat with any who invited him. He neither practised nor enjoined the austerities, which carry the air of superior sanctity in the judgment of weak and superstitious minds. They therefore styled him a glutton and wine-bibber (Luke vii. 34,) a friend of publicans and sinners; that is, as they intended it, a companion with them, and a conniver at their wickedness. Nothing could be more false and slanderous than this charge, or more easily refuted, if the people would examine closely. But as it came from teachers who were highly reverenced for mortification, and as Jesus was usually attended by many with whom it was thought infamous to associate, it could not but have great weight with the credulous and indolent.

4. They laid much stress upon the mean condition of his followers. They were mostly Galileans, a people of small estimation, and of the lowest rank, fishermen, or publicans; while, on the other hand, few or none of the rulers or Pharisees, who were presumed to be best qualified (John vii. 48) to judge of his pretensions, had believed on him. Those who are acquainted with human nature, cannot but know how strongly this appeal to the judgment of persons eminent for their learning or station, operates upon minds who have no better criterion of truth. How could a Jew, who had been from his infancy superstitiously attached to the Pharisees, suppose, that these eminently devout men, who spent their lives in the study of the law, would have rejected Jesus, if he had been a good man?

5. When, notwithstanding all their surmises, multitudes still professed high thoughts of Jesus, beholding his wonderful works, they proceeded with the most blasphemous effrontery to defame the miracles they could not deny, and maliciously ascribed them to the agency of the devil, Matth. xii. 14. This pertinacious resistance to the conviction, both of their senses and consciences, was the highest stage of impiety, and constituted their sin, as our Lord assured them, unpardonable. Not that any sin, considered in itself, is too great for the blood of Jesus to expiate; but as they utterly renounced and scorned his mediation, there remained no other sacrifice, but they were judicially given up to incurable impenitence and hardness of heart. Yet it is probable, that even this black assertion was not without influence upon some, who were wedded to their sins, and therefore glad of any pretext, how unreasonable soever, to refuse the testimony of truth.

6. Another means they made use of, the last we shall enumerate, and not the least effectual to intimidate the minds of the people from acknowledging Jesus, was the convincing argument of violence and ill treatment. Having the power in their hands they employed it against his followers, and made an agreement, that whoever confessed he was Christ, should be put out of the synagogue (John ix. 22,) that is, *excommunicated.* This decree seems to have been made by the Sanhedrim, or great council, and to imply, not merely an exclusion from the rights of public worship, but likewise a positive punishment equivalent to an *outlawry* with us. The fear of incurring this penalty (John xii. 42) restrained the parents of the man born blind, and prevented many others who were in their hearts convinced that he was the Messiah, from owning him as such. They loved the world; they preferred the praise of men to the praise of God; and therefore remained silent and neuter.

From such motives, and by such methods, our Lord was resisted and opposed by the heads of the Jewish nation. The scribes and teachers, to whom the key of knowledge was by authority committed, disdained to use it themselves, and those who were willing they hindered. Had they been wise and faithful, they would have directed the people to Christ; but, on the contrary, they darkened the plainest scriptures, and perverted the clearest facts, to prevent, if possible, his reception. In vain he spoke as never man spoke, and multiplied the wonders of his power and love in their presence. In vain to them.—They pursued him with unwearied subtlety and malice,* traduced him to the people and to the government, and would be satisfied with nothing less than his death; so obstinate and wicked is the heart of man, so fatal are the prejudices of pride and worldly interest. For as we observed before, these tempers were not peculiar to the Jews; they are essential to depraved nature, and operate universally, where the grace of God does not make a difference. To this hour the gospel of Christ is opposed upon the same grounds, and by the like artifices, as were once employed against his person.

The doctrines which his faithful ministers deduce and enforce from the written word, are no other than what he himself taught, namely, a declaration of his personal honours and authority, of the insufficiency of formal worship, in which the heart is not concerned, of the extent and spirituality of the law of God, and of salvation, freely proclaimed to the miserable, through faith in his name. The self-righteous, the self-wise, and all who are devoted to the pleasures and honours of the world, have each their particular excep-

* Mark xii. 13. They sent unto him certain of the Pharisees *to catch him.* Αγρευω expresses the art and assiduity of sportsmen, in the various methods they use to ensnare, entangle, or destroy their game. It well suits the spirit and design of our Lord's enemies in the question proposed, and is finely contrasted by the meekness and wisdom of his answer.

tions to these truths. The wisdom of God they account foolishness; and the language of their hearts is, We will not have this man to reign over us. And the success of these doctrines, which is chiefly visible among such as they have been accustomed to despise, is equally offensive; yet so inconsistent are they, that if here and there a few persons, who were before eminent for their rank, attainments, or morality, are prevailed on to account all things but loss and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord, this, instead of removing their first objection, excites their rage and contempt still more.

And as the motives of their hatred, so their methods of expressing it, are the same. They are not ashamed to adopt and exaggerate the most vulgar misconceptions; they set the scripture at variance with itself; and while they pass over the plainest and most important passages unnoticed, they dwell upon a few texts of more dubious import, and therefore more easily accommodated to their sense. With these they flourish and triumph, and affect a high zeal in defence of the word of God. They reproach the pure gospel as licentious, because it exposes the vanity of their singularities and will-worship, and are desirous to bind heavier burdens upon men's shoulders, which few of themselves will touch with one of their fingers. They enlarge on the weakness and ignorance of those who mostly receive the new doctrine, and entrench themselves under the sanction of learned and dignified names. They even venture to explode and vilify the evident effects of God's grace, and ascribe the agency of his Spirit to enthusiasm, infatuation, and madness, if not expressly to diabolical influence. And, lastly, so far as Divine Providence permits, they show themselves actuated by the primitive spirit of oppression and violence, in pursuing the faithful followers of the truth with censures and penalties.

But let who will rage and imagine vain things, Jesus is the King in Zion. He is the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever. There were a happy few in the days of his flesh, who beheld his glory, trusted on him for salvation, and attended him amidst the many reproaches and sufferings he endured from sinners. Of these his first witnesses, we are to speak in the following chapter. His gospel likewise, though opposed by many, and slighted by more, is never preached in vain. To some it will always be the power and wisdom of God; they know in whom they have believed, and therefore are not ashamed to appear in his cause against all disadvantages. Supported and encouraged by his Spirit, they go on from strength to strength, and are successively made more than conquerors, by his blood and the word of his testimony.

CHAPTER IV.

Observations on the calling and character of our Lord's apostles and disciples previous to his ascension.

FROM what has been observed in the preceding chapters, it is evident, that those who assert a principle of free-will in man, sufficiently enabling him to choose and determine for himself, when the truths of the gospel are plainly laid before him, do thereby (as far as in them lies) render the salvation of mankind highly precarious, if not utterly hopeless and impracticable. Notwithstanding God was pleased to send his own Son with a gracious message; notwithstanding his whole life was a series of wonders, and all his actions discovered a wisdom, power, and goodness answerable to his high character; notwithstanding the time, manner, and design of his appearance and sufferings had been clearly foretold; yet, so far as a judgment can be made from the event, he would certainly have lived and died in vain, without influence or honour, without leaving a single disciple, if the same grace that provided the means of redemption, had not engaged to make them effectual, by preparing and disposing the hearts of sinners to receive him.

In the account given us by the evangelists of those who professed themselves his disciples, we may discern, as in miniature, the general methods of his grace; and, comparing his personal ministry with the effects of his gospel in all succeeding times, we may be assured that the work and the power are still the same. The choice he made of his disciples, the manner of their calling, their characters, and even their defects, and failings; in a word, all that is recorded concerning them, is written for our instruction, and is particularly useful to teach us the true meaning of what passes within our own observation.

1. Several things are worthy our notice, in this view, with respect to the choice of his disciples.

1st, They were comparatively very few. He was, indeed, usually attended by multitudes in the different places where he preached, because he spoke with a power they had never met with before, and because he healed the sick, fed the hungry, and did good to all. But he had very few constant followers. Those who assembled at Jerusalem after his ascension, are said to have been but about one hundred and twenty (Acts i. 15;) and when he appointed his disciples a solemn meeting in Galilee, informing them beforehand of the time and place where he would come to them, the number that then met here is expressed by the apostle to have been more than five hundred, 1 Cor. xv. 6.* We

* The word *brethren* here used does not prove that none but men were present at that time, any more than

can hardly suppose, that any who loved him, and were able to travel, would have been absent upon so interesting an occasion; but how small a company was this, compared with the many thousands among whom he had conversed in all the cities and villages through which he had passed, preaching the gospel, and performing innumerable miracles, for more than three years! Well might the prophet say, foreseeing the small success he would meet with, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" But since he, in whom the fulness of grace resided, had so few disciples, it may lessen our surprise, that his gospel, though in itself the power and wisdom of God, should meet with so cold a reception amongst men, as it has in fact always done.

2dly, Of those few who professed a more entire attachment to his person, a considerable part, after attending him for some time, went back, and walked no more with him. They were but superficially convinced, and rather struck with the power of his words and works, than deeply sensible of their own need of him. When, therefore, upon a certain occasion, he spake of the more inward and experimental part of religion, the life of faith, and the necessity of eating his flesh, and drinking his blood, so many were offended at his doctrine, and forsook him (John vi. 66, 67,) that he said unto the twelve, "Will ye also go away?" which seems to imply, that there were few but these remaining. Therefore, though we see at present that where the sound of the gospel brings multitudes together, many, who for a season appeared in earnest, gradually decline in their profession, and at length wholly return to their former ways, we have the less reason to wonder or be discouraged, remembering that it was thus from the beginning.

3dly, Those who believed in Christ then, were chiefly (as we had occasion to observe before) persons of low condition, and many of them had been formerly vile and obnoxious in their conduct. While the wise and learned rejected him, his more immediate followers were Galileans, fishermen, publicans, and sinners. This was observed, and urged to his reproach and theirs; and the like offence has always attended his gospel. But what enraged his enemies, fills the hearts and mouths of his poor people with praise. They adore his condescension (Luke i. 52, 53) in taking notice of the most unworthy, and admire the efficacy of his grace in making those who were once wretched slaves to Satan, a free and willing people in the day of his power.

4thly, But this was not universally the case. Though not many wise, rich, or noble were called, there were some even of these. His grace triumphed over every circumstance of life. Zaccheus was a rich man,* Nicodemus a ruler of the Jews, Joseph an honourable counsellor. We also read of a nobleman or courtier, who believed, with all his house. In every age, likewise, there have been some persons of distinguished eminence for birth, honours, and abilities, who have cheerfully engaged in the profession of a despised gospel, though they have thereby incurred a double share of opposition from the men of the world, especially from those of their own rank. The number of these has been always sufficient to confute those who would insinuate that the gospel is only suited to the taste of the vulgar and ignorant; yet it has always been so small as to make it evident, that the truth is not supported by the wisdom or influence of men, but by the power and providence of God.

5thly, It was farther observable, that several of our Lord's few disciples were under previous connections amongst themselves. Peter and Andrew were brothers (John i. 40,) as likewise James and John; and these, together with Philip, and perhaps Nathaniel, seem to have been all of one town.† The other James and Jude were also brethren. So it is said, Jesus loved Mary, and her sister, and Lazarus, three in one house, when perhaps the whole place hardly afforded a fourth; and more in a single village than were to be found in many larger cities taken together. This circumstance more strongly marked the discrimination of his grace, in making the means effectual where and to whom he pleased. Such has been the usual event of his gospel since. It is proclaimed to all, but accepted by few; and of these several are often found in one family, while their next-door neighbours account it a burden and offence. It flourishes here and there in a few places (Amos iv. 7,) while those of the adjacent country are buried in more than Egyptian darkness, and resist the endeavours of those who would invite them to

that, because the apostles, in their public preaching, addressed their hearers as men and brethren, there were therefore no women amongst them, or that the women were not considered as having any interest or concern in the gospel-ministry

* Zaccheus was a chief or principal publican, to whom the rest were accountable; a commissioner of the public revenue. *And he was rich.* The Greek is more expressive, *And this was a rich man*, Luke xix. 2, perhaps alluding to what had passed a little before, chap. xviii. 25 This remark is added, to remind us, that what is impossible with men, is easy to him who can speak to the heart, and turn it as he will.

† Compare Mark i. 16, Luke v. 10, with John i. 44, 45. These six, and more than these, were fishermen (John xxi. 2,) and such they continued, only their net-success and capture were so much changed, that it became a new calling: he made them fishers of men. In the fishermen's calling there is required a certain dexterity, much patience, and a readiness to bear hardships. Perhaps many observations they made in their former business were useful to them afterwards. And the Lord still brings up his servants so, that the remembrance of former years (the years of ignorance) becomes a rule and encouragement in future and different scenes of life.

partake of the same benefits. Thus the Lord is pleased to display his own sovereignty, in raising and sending forth his ministers, when and where he sees fit, and in determining the subjects and measure of their success. If others dispute and cavil against this procedure,* those who believe have cause to adore his goodness to themselves. And a day is at hand, when every mouth shall be stopped that would contend with the just Judge of all the earth. The impenitent and unbelieving will not then dare to charge him with injustice for dealing with them according to their own counsels and desires, inasmuch as when the light of truth was ready to break upon them, they chose darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

2. In the calling of our Lord's disciples, and the manner in which they were brought to know and serve him, we may discover the same variety as at this day appears in the conversion of sinners by the preaching of the gospel.

Some, from a religious education, an early acquaintance with the scriptures, and the secret influence of the Spirit of God upon their hearts, are gradually prepared for the reception of the truth. They read, and strive, and pray; they feel an uneasiness, and a want, which they know not how to remedy; they are sincerely desirous to know and do the will of God; and yet, through misapprehension, and the influence of popular prejudice, they are, for a season, withheld from the means that would relieve them. But at length the preaching of the gospel explains to them the meaning of their former exercises, exactly answers to the state of their minds, and thereby brings its own evidence. Similar to this was the case of Nathaniel. When our Lord referred him to what had passed under the fig-tree, where he had thought himself alone and unobserved, his doubts and scruples vanished in an instant. There is little doubt but Nathaniel had been praying under the fig-tree, and probably desiring a farther knowledge of the prophecies, and their accomplishment in the Messiah. He had heard of Jesus, but could not fully clear up the objections made against him; but now he was convinced and satisfied in a moment.

The attention of some is drawn by what they see and hear around them. They form a favourable opinion of the gospel from the remarkable effects it produces; but their first inquiries are damped by difficulties which they cannot easily get over, and they are ready to say, How can these things be? Their interests and connections in life are a farther hinderance; the fear of man, which bringeth a snare, is a great restraint upon their inquiries; but now and then when they can venture without being noticed, they seek farther instruction. Now, though this hesitating spirit, which pays so much deference to worldly regards in the search of truth, is highly blameable; yet the Lord who is rich in mercy, is often pleased to produce a happy and abiding change from such imperfect beginnings. As they increase in knowledge, they gain more courage, and in time arrive to a comfortable experience and open profession of the truth. Thus it was with Nicodemus: he was at first ignorant and fearful; but his interview with Jesus by night, had a good effect. He afterwards ventured to speak more publicly (John vii. 50) in his favour, though still he did not join himself to the disciples: but the circumstances of Christ's death freed him from all fear, and inspired him to attempt the most obnoxious service, when the apostles themselves were afraid to be seen, John xix. 39.

Others are first prompted to hear the gospel from no higher motive than curiosity; but going as mere spectators, they find themselves retained as parties unawares. The word of God, powerful and penetrating as a two-edged sword, discovers the thoughts and intents of their hearts, presses upon their consciences, and seems addressed to themselves alone. The sentiments they carry away with them are far different from those they brought; and a change in their whole deportment immediately takes place. Such was the case of Zaccheus (Luke xix. 5:) he had heard much of Jesus, and desired to see him; for this end, he ran before, and climbed a tree, from whence he purposed to behold him unobserved. But how great must his surprise and emotion have been, when Jesus, whom he had considered as a stranger, looked up, called him by his name, and invited himself to his house.

Some are drawn by the report of others, freely declaring what the Lord has done for their souls. The relation awakens in them desires after him which are not disappointed; for he is rich enough to satisfy all who seek to him. So the Samaritans, whose expectations were first raised by the woman's declaration, "Come and see a man which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" (John iv. 43) had soon a more convincing testimony, and could say, "Now we believe, not because of thy word, but we

* See Rom. xi. 23. There are but few who dispute upon the subject of the divine decrees with that reverence and caution St. Paul expresses. In chap. ix. when an objection was started, he cuts it short with, "But who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?" And here he breaks off abruptly, with "O the depth!" &c. He seems to have followed the narrow winding streams of human reasoning, till he finds himself unawares upon the brink of an ocean that has neither bounds nor bottom. And every word expresses the reverence and astonishment with which his mind was filled; the wisdom of the divine councils in their first plan; the knowledge of their extensive consequences in this world, in all worlds, in time, and in eternity; the riches of that wisdom and knowledge; the depth of those riches; his counsels inaccessible, his proceedings untraceable: all is wonderful in St. Paul's view. How different this from the trifling arrogant spirit of too many upon this topic!

have heard him ourselves; and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

To a few the first impulses of divine grace come suddenly and unthought of, when their hearts and hands are engaged quite another way; as Saul, who was seeking his father's asses, received the unexpected news of a kingdom. A ray of truth pierces their minds like lightning, and disposes them to leave their schemes unfinished, to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness only. Thus our Lord passed by the sons of Zebedee when mending their nets (Mark i. 16. 19,) and Matthew while busied at the receipt of custom, Mark ii. 14. He only said, *Follow me;* he used no arguments, he proposed no rewards; but he spoke to their hearts, and, by the constraining power of his love, engaged them to a cheerful and immediate obedience.

Afflictions likewise are now, no less than formerly, a happy means to bring many to Jesus. He prepares them for heavenly blessings, by embittering or removing their creature-comforts. Had they continued in prosperity, they would not have thought of him; but the loss of health, or friends, or substance, disappointments in life, or a near prospect of death, constrain them in good earnest to seek for one able to deliver them. In the time of their distress, they say, Arise, and save us; not that afflictions in themselves can produce this turn of thought. Too many, in such circumstances, toss like a wild bull in a net; but when he sends afflictions for this purpose, they accomplish that which he pleases. Thus, when he was upon earth, many who came, or were brought (Mark ii. 9) to him for the relief of bodily disorders, experienced a double cure. He healed (John ix. 7. 36. 38) their diseases, and pardoned their sins. At the same time that he restored the blind to sight (John iv. 53,) he opened the eyes of their minds. He sometimes made the afflictions of one the means to bring a whole family to the knowledge of his grace. A considerable part of his followers were such as these, whom he had graciously relieved from distresses incurable by any hand but his. Some had been long and grievously tormented; had assayed every means, but found themselves worse and worse, till they applied to him; and having known the happy effects of his power and compassion, they would leave him no more.

Lastly, We sometimes meet with instances of his mercy and ability to save even to the uttermost, in the unhoped-for conversion of desperate and hardened sinners, who have gone on with a high hand, regardless of mercies, warnings, and judgments, till they seemed past conviction, and given up to a reprobate mind. Their state resembles that of the demoniac, Luke viii. They are so entirely under the power of the devil (though perhaps they vainly boast of freedom,) that no arguments, no motives, no resolutions, can restrain them within bounds; but they break through every tie of nature, conscience, and reason, and are restless drudges in the service of sin, though they feel themselves miserable at present, and see inevitable ruin before their eyes. Yet even this case is not too hard for him on whom the sinner's help is laid. He can dispossess the legion with a word; he can take the prey from the mighty, and deliver the lawful captive, bind the strong one armed, and divide his spoil. Happy change! when the power of grace not only sets the soul at liberty from sin and Satan, but puts it in possession of what were lately the instruments of its slavery! when all the powers and faculties of body and mind are redeemed to the Lord's use, and the experience of past evil is made conducive to future comfort and advantage! Such an instance was that great sinner, that penitent, believing, happy soul, of whom it is emphatically remarked, "She loved much, because much had been forgiven her," Luke vii. 47. Sometimes the deliverance is deferred till near the period of life. The poor wretch, labouring under the pangs or dread of death, and trembling at the apprehension of falling into the hands of the living God, is snatched as a brand out of the fire; he receives faith in a suffering Saviour, and feels the power of atoning blood; his terrors cease, and joy succeeds, a joy unspeakable and full of glory. Thus the expiring malefactor was converted upon the cross (Luke xxiii. 43,) and received an infallible assurance of salvation.

3. The characters of our Lord's disciples, with the account we have of their defects and failings, may farther illustrate the history of his church and gospel, and afford an apology for the blemishes, which, through human infirmity, do more or less attend the prevalence of his doctrines.

The grace of God has a real influence upon the whole man. It enlightens the understanding, directs the will, purifies the affections, regulates the passions, and corrects the different excesses to which different persons are by constitution or habit inclined, yet it seldom wholly changes the complexion or temper of the animal frame. It does not impart any new natural powers, though it teaches the use and improvement of those we have received. It will dispose us to seek instruction, make us open to conviction, and willing to part with our prejudices, so far and so soon as we discover them, but it will not totally and instantaneously remove them. Hence there are a great variety of characters in the christian life; and the several graces of the Spirit, as zeal, love, meekness, faith, appear with peculiar advantage in different subjects, yet so that every commendable pro-

perty is subject to its particular inconvenience. Perfection cannot be found in fallen man. The best are sometimes blameable, and the wisest often mistaken. Warm and active tempers, though influenced in the main by the noble ambition of pleasing God in all things, are apt to overshoot themselves, and to discover a resentment and keenness of spirit which cannot be wholly justified. Others of a more fixed and sedate temper, though less subject to this extreme, are prone to its opposite; their gentleness degenerates into indolence, their caution into cowardice. The principle of self, likewise, which, though subdued, is not eradicated, will in some instances appear. Add to this the unknown access and influence which the evil spirits have upon our minds, the sudden and new emergencies which surprise us into action before we have had time to deliberate, with many other considerations of a like nature; and it will be no wonder that some things are always amiss* in the best and most successfu attempts to promote the glory of God and the good of souls. And it is farther to be noted, that some individuals will be found who, though seemingly engaged in the same good work, and for a time pretending to much zeal, are essentially defective in their hearts and views; and when at length their true characters are exposed, the world, who either cannot, or will not distinguish, charge the faults of a few upon a whole profession, as, in the former case, they wound the character of a good man for unavoidable and involuntary mistakes. We shall therefore show, that either the exceptions made, and so loudly reverberated in our ears, against the gospel doctrine, on these accounts, are unjust, or that there was sufficient cause to reject and condemn our Lord and his apostles for the same reasons.

The character of Peter is marked with admirable propriety and consistency by the evangelists. He every where appears like himself. Earnestly devoted to his Master's person, and breathing an honest warmth for his service, he was in a manner the eye, the hand, the mouth of the apostles: he was the first to ask, to answer, to propose, and to execute: he made a noble confession, for which our Lord honoured him with a peculiar commendation: he waited but for a command to walk to him upon the water: he was not afraid to expose himself in his Lord's defence, when he was surrounded and apprehended by his enemies: and though, in this last instance, his affection was ill expressed, yet his motive was undoubtedly praise-worthy. His heart flamed with zeal and love, and therefore he was always forward to distinguish himself.

But the warmth of Peter's temper often betrayed him into great difficulties, and showed that the grace he had received was consistent with many imperfections. Though he sincerely loved Christ, and had forsaken all for him, he was at one time so ignorant of the true design of his incarnation, that he was angry and impatient to hear him speak of his sufferings, and brought upon himself a most severe rebuke. Not content with the ordinary services allotted to him, he offered himself to unnecessary trials, as in the above instance, when he pressed to walk upon the water. The event showed him his own weakness and insufficiency, yet his self-confidence revived and continued. When our Lord warned him again and again of his approaching fall, he thought, and boldly affirmed that it was impossible. He was sincere in his protestation; but the actual experiment was necessary to convince and humble him. Accordingly, when left to himself, he fell before the first temptation. And here the impetuosity of his temper was still manifest. He did not stop at a simple denial of Jesus, he confirmed it by an oath,† and at length proceeded to utter bitter imprecations against himself, if he so much as knew him, whom he had seen transfigured in glory upon the mount, and prostrate in an agony in the garden. Such was the weakness and inconsistency of this prince of the apostles.

None of these excesses appeared in the conduct of the traitor Judas. He was so circumspect and reserved, that we do not find any of the disciples had the least suspicion of him. But, whilst his heart was full of wickedness, he could find fault with others, and charge their best expressions of love with indiscretion. When Mary anointed our Lord's feet with ointment (John xii. 5, 6,) he was displeased at the waste, and professed a warm concern for the poor; but we are told the true reason of his economy: It was not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag which contained the common stock entrusted to him. The charge of the bag is an office full of temptation, and an attachment to the bag has been often at the bottom of many censures and misrepresentations which have been thrown out against the people of God. It has been, and it will be so; but the Lord has appointed that wherever the gospel should be preached, to the end of the world, this action of Mary, with the observation of Judas upon it, and

* A lukewarm, cautious spirit can easily avoid, and readily censure the mistakes and faults of those who, fired with an honest warmth for the honour of God and the good of souls, are sometimes transported beyond the bounds of strict prudence. But though the best intention cannot make that right which is wrong in itself, yet the zeal, diligence, and disinterested aim of such persons are worthy of our esteem.

† Mark xiv. 71. "He began to curse and swear."—To imprecate the most dreadful curses upon himself, and call solemnly on God to execute them. This was indeed the most probable method to free himself from the suspicion of being a disciple of Jesus, for no such language had been till then heard among his followers.

the motive from which he made it, should be handed down together, that we may not be discouraged at things of the same kind. Without doubt, the treason of Judas, and his unhappy end, after having maintained a fair character so long, and shared with the rest in the honours of the apostleship, were to them an occasion of grief, and afforded their enemies a subject of reproach and triumph. But we may believe one reason why our Lord chose Judas, and continued him so long with his disciples, to have been, that we might learn by this awful instance not to be surprised if some, who have made a show in the church, been chosen to important offices, and furnished with excellent gifts, do in the end prove hypocrites and traitors: "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

A desire of pre-eminence and distinction is very unsuitable to the followers of Jesus, who made himself the servant of all; very unbecoming the best of the children of men, who owe their breath to the mercy of God, have nothing that they can call their own, and have been unfaithful in the improvement of every talent. We allow that every appearance of this is a blemish in the christian character, and especially in a christian minister; but if, on some occasions, and in some degree, human infirmity has wrought this way, though no example can justify it, yet those who, through ignorance of their own hearts, are too rigid censurers of others, may be reminded that this evil frequently discovered itself in the apostles. They often disputed who should be the greatest; and, when our Lord was speaking of his approaching sufferings, two of them chose that unseasonable time to preclude the rest, and petitioned that they might have the chief seats in his kingdom. The first offence was theirs; but when the ten heard it, they were all moved with indignation, and showed themselves equally desirous of superiority. It is plain, therefore, that unless the apostles were hypocrites and mercenaries, some transient escapes of this sort (though confessedly criminal and indecent) are no sure proofs that such a person is not in the main sincere, disinterested, and truly devoted to the service of God and his gospel.

No less contrary to the meek and gracious spirit of Jesus is an angry zeal, expressing itself in terms of ill-will and bitterness to those who oppose or injure us. One of the highest attainments and brightest evidences of true grace, is, from a sense of the love and example of Christ, to show bowels of mercy and long-suffering to all men, and by perseverance in well-doing to overcome evil with good. And a contrary behaviour (if frequent and notorious) will, like a dead fly in precious ointment, destroy the savour, if not the efficacy of all we can attempt for the service of God in the world. However, if repeated falschoods, and studied provocations do sometimes, in an unguarded moment, extort from the disciples of Christ such expressions and marks of displeasure as in their cooler hours they willingly retract and sincerely repent of before God, this ought not to be exaggerated beyond bounds, as an offence inconsistent with their profession, at least not by any who would be afraid to speak dishonourably of the apostles James and John, who once went so far in their anger* as to demand that fire might be sent from heaven to devour their adversaries, Luke ix. 54.

We might proceed to other particulars; but enough has been said to show the general resemblance which the preaching of the gospel in latter times bears to our Lord's personal ministry: the doctrine is the same, the effects the same. It was, and it is to many, "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence." The opposition it has met with has been always owing to the same evil principle of pride, and the love of sin, which are latent in every unrenewed heart: though the pretexts are various, they may be reduced to a few leading motives which are always at work. The professors of this gospel have at no time been very numerous, if compared with those who have rejected it; and of these, too many have dishonoured or forsaken it. Neither have those who have received it most cordially, and been most desirous to adorn and promote it, been wholly exempt from mistakes and imperfections. The tenor of their conduct has proved them partakers of a more excellent spirit than others; their faith in Jesus has not been an empty notion, but fruitful of good works, such as no man could do except God was with him. They have been governed by higher motives, and devoted to nobler aims, than the world can either understand or bear;—yet they are deeply conscious of inherent infirmity, and sometimes (to their great grief) they give too visible proofs of it, which their watchful adversaries are glad to aggravate and charge upon them as consequences of their doctrine. This should induce all who love the Lord Jesus to redouble their guard, and to pray with David that they may be led in the right way because of their observers. If the question is concerning the infirmities, or even

* They thought they were influenced by a commendable zeal for their Master, and that their proposal was warranted by an authorized precedent. We do not find that they ever wished for fire to consume the Scribes and Pharisees, who were Christ's most inveterate enemies. But when the Samaritans rejected him, the vile Samaritans, whom they, upon a national prejudice, had been accustomed to hate, then their hearts deceived them, and they indulged their own corrupt passions, while they supposed they were animated by a zeal for Christ. Are we not often deceived in the same way? Can we not silently bear, or ingenuously extenuate the faults and mistakes of our own party, while we are all zeal and emotion to expose, censure, and condemn what is amiss in others.

the vices of others, almost every one is ready to plead in their behalf; allowances are freely and largely made for human frailty, and none are willing to be thought harsh or censorious. But the believer in Jesus must look for no abatement or extenuation; even the professed admirers of candour and charity will not hesitate to put the worst construction upon all he says or does; for they are seeking occasion to wound the gospel through his misconduct. They are sensible that he is generally above them; and therefore rejoice to find or pretend a flaw, on which they may expatiate, to reduce him as near as possible to their own level; though, if their censures are extended to their just consequence, they will (as we have seen) fall hard upon the apostles themselves.

I hope, that what I have said upon this subject will neither be misunderstood nor perverted. We do not defend even the infirmities of the best men; much less would we provide a plea for persecution or ambition. Let not the man, who supposes gain to be godliness, who makes the gospel a ladder, whereby to climb the heights of worldly preferment, whose heart, like the insatiable fire, is craving more, and practising every art to accumulate wealth and honour in the church; let not the proud man, who would lord it over conscience, and though unable to command fire from heaven, would gladly prepare fire and slaughter upon earth for all who will not venture their souls upon his faith; let not these avail themselves of the examples of James and John: but rather let them tremble at the reflection, that while they manifest no part of the apostles' graces, they are entirely possessed of those tempers, the smallest traces of which our Lord so severely rebuked in his disciples.

The first believers, though not faultless, were sincere: the natural disposition of their hearts was changed; they believed in Jesus; they loved him; they devoted themselves to his service; they submitted to his instructions, shared in his reproach, and could not be either enticed or intimidated to leave him. Their gracious Master was their guide and guard, their advocate and counsellor; when they were in want, in danger, in trouble, or in doubt, they applied to him, and found relief; hence they learned by degrees to cast all their care upon him. He corrected every wrong disposition; he pardoned their failings, and enabled them to do better. His precepts taught them true wisdom; and his own example, which, to those who loved him, had the force of a thousand precepts, was at once the model and the motive of their obedience. To make them ashamed of aspiring to be chief, he himself, though Lord of all, conversed among them as a servant, and condescended to wash their feet; to teach them forbearance and gentleness to their opposers, they saw him weep over his bitterest enemies, and heard him pray for his actual murderers.

Thus they gradually advanced in faith, love, and holiness, as the experience of every day disclosed to them some new discovery of the treasures of wisdom, grace, and power, residing in their Lord and Saviour: he explained to them in private the difficulties which occurred in his more public discourses; by his observations on the common occurrences of life he opened to them the mysterious volumes of creation and providence, which none but those whom he vouchsafes to teach can understand aright: he prayed for them, and with them, and taught them to pray for themselves: he revealed unto them the unseen realities of the eternal world, and supported them under the prospect of approaching trials; particularly of his departure from them, by assuring them that he was going on their behalf to prepare them a place in his kingdom, and that in a little time he would return to receive them to himself, that they might dwell with him for ever.

What he personally spoke to them, and acted in their presence, was recorded by his direction, and has been preserved by his providence for the use and comfort of his church. Though his enemies have raged horribly, they have not been able to suppress the divine volume; and, though invisible to mortal eyes, he is still near to all that seek him; and so supplies the want of his bodily presence by the secret communications of his Spirit, that his people have no reason to complain of any disadvantage: though they see him not, they believe, love, rejoice, and obey; their attention and dependence are fixed upon him; they intrust him with all their concerns; they rely upon his promises; they behold him as their High-priest, Advocate, and Shepherd; they live upon his fulness, and plead his righteousness; and they find and feel that their reliance is not in vain.

The disciples were content for his sake to bear the scorn and injurious treatment of the world: they expected no better usage, nor desired a higher honour, than to be fellow-sufferers with their Lord. When he proposed returning to Judea, at a time they thought dangerous, and they could not alter his purpose, they did not wish to be left behind: "Let us go (says one of them to the rest,) that we may die with him." It is true, when he was actually apprehended, the first shock of the trial was too strong: they forsook him and fled. He permitted this, both to exempt them from danger, and to let them know that of themselves they could do nothing. But it seems they did not go far. When Thomas afterwards said, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails,

and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe," he spoke like one who had been an eye-witness to his sufferings, and expresses an earnestness as if he still saw him wounded and bleeding. This catastrophe indeed almost disconcerted them; they had trusted it was he that should deliver Israel; but they saw him oppressed and slain by wicked men. From that time to his resurrection was a mournful interval, the darkest and most distressing period his church ever knew.

But the third day dispelled their grief: he returned victorious from the grave, proclaiming peace by the blood of the cross; he declared, and his appearance proved it, that the ransom was paid and accepted; and that having now overcome the sharpness of death, he had opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Then he spoke peace to their hearts: he opened their understandings to know the scriptures, and breathed upon them his Holy Spirit: he conversed frequently with them during forty days; gave them a large commission to preach his gospel, and an invaluable promise of his presence with them to the end of the world.

When he had thus confirmed them by those instructions and assurances, which his wisdom saw necessary, he was received up to heaven. They followed him with their hearts and eyes a while, and then returned to Jerusalem rejoicing. They were not ashamed of their crucified Lord, or unwilling to bear the contemptuous names of Galileans or Nazarenes for his sake. They were not afraid, as if left like sheep without a shepherd in the midst of their enemies: they knew, that though they could see him no more, his eye would be always upon them, and his ear open to their prayer: they waited, according to his command, for a farther supply of his Spirit, to qualify them for the important and difficult services which were before them. Nor did they wait long; a few days after his ascension, while they were praying with one heart and mind, the place where they were assembled was shaken as with a mighty wind; the Spirit of power and wisdom was abundantly communicated to them; they spoke with new tongues, and immediately began to preach boldly, in the name of the Lord Jesus.

With this solemn and memorable event, I shall open the second book, and take up the thread of the gospel history from that glorious day of divine power. The contents of this first book, namely, a brief view of the necessity and nature of the gospel-dispensation,—the causes why it is and has been opposed,—and the circumstances of the first believers,—I have premised, as general principles, for my own and the reader's assistance in the progress of the work.

It is much to be wished, that every reader might be impressed with the importance of our subject. It is not a point of curiosity, but of universal concern, and that in the highest and most interesting sense. Most of the researches and disquisitions which employ the time and talents of men, are of a trivial or indifferent nature. We may range on different sides concerning them; we may give or refuse, or retract our assent, when and as often as we please; we may be totally ignorant of them without loss, or be skilled in them all without deriving any solid comfort or advantage from them: but the gospel of Christ is not like the dry uninteresting theories of human wisdom; it will either wound or heal, be a savour of life or of death, a source of endless comfort, or the occasion of aggravated condemnation, to all that hear of it. To receive it, is to receive the earnest and assurance of eternal happiness; to reject it, or remain wilfully ignorant of its characters and properties, will leave the soul oppressed with guilt, and exposed to the wrath of God for ever. It highly concerns us, therefore, to inquire, Whether we believe the gospel or no, whether what we call the gospel is the same that Christ and his apostles taught, and whether it has had the same or similar effects upon our hearts? We live where the gospel is generally professed, and we are reputed christians from our cradles; but the word of God cautions us to take heed, lest we be deceived. We see christianity divided into innumerable sects and parties, each supported by names, arguments, and books, and fighting for the credit of a denomination: but how many forget, that in a little time all these divisions and subdivisions will be reduced to two; the only real and proper distribution by which mankind, as to their religious character, ever was or will be distinguished, and according to which their final states will be speedily decided,—The children of God, and the children of the wicked one.

BOOK II.

OF THE SECOND PERIOD OF CHRISTIANITY.

CHAPTER I.

Of the progress of the gospel from our Lord's ascension to the close of the first century.

The natural weakness of man is conspicuous in his most important undertakings: having no fund of sufficiency in himself, he is forced to collect all from without; and if the greatness of his preparations are not answerable to the extent of his designs, he has little hopes of success. Farther, when he has planned and provided to the utmost of his power, he is still subject to innumerable contingencies, which he can neither foresee nor prevent; and has often the mortification to see his fairest prospects blasted, and the whole apparatus of his labour and care only contribute to make his disappointment more conspicuous and painful.

The reverse of this is the character of the wonder-working God. To his power every thing is easy: he knows how to employ every creature and contingence, as a means to accomplish his designs; not a seeming difficulty can intervene but by his permission; and he only permits it to illustrate his own wisdom and agency, in making it subservient to his will. Thus, having all hearts and events in his hands, he fulfils his own counsels with the utmost ease and certainty; and to show that the work is his own, he often proceeds by such methods as vain men account weak and insignificant; producing the most extensive and glorious consequences from small and inconsiderable beginnings. Thus the Lord of hosts hath purposed to stain the pride of all human glory.

This observation might be confirmed by innumerable examples taken from the common history and experience of mankind; but the subject of our present undertaking exhibits the most illustrious proof. When the Jews had seen Jesus crucified, dead, and buried, they expected to hear no more of him: his disciples were few, men of no authority, learning, or influence; and since their master, who had made them such large promises, was at last unable to save himself from death, it was probably expected, that his followers would disperse of course, forsake their supposed delusions, and return to their fishing, and other employments suited to their capacities and talents.

They knew not that Jesus had arisen from the dead, and had frequently shown himself to his servants, to comfort and confirm their hearts. They little thought that he, whom they had seen expire on the cross, was immoveably seated at the right hand of God, possessed of all power in heaven and earth; but his disciples knew this, and therefore continued to assemble in his name. We do not find that there was much notice taken of them till the feast of Pentecost, which was about ten days after his ascension. At this season,* by the Jewish law, the first fruits of the earth were presented at the temple. An appointment, typical of those more sublime first fruits of spiritual gifts and graces with which the Lord on this day enriched his disciples, according to his promise, enabling them to preach his gospel, and make his word effectual to the conversion of a large multitude; as an earnest of that divine power, by which he would support and extend his church and ministry to the end of the world.

When the hearts of God's people are united in love, and pleading his promises in the fervent exercise of faith and prayer, great things may be expected. Such was the happy state of the disciples on this solemn day: they were assembled with one accord; no jars or divisions had as yet taken place among them; they were animated with one desire, and praying with one mind. Suddenly and wonderfully they obtained an answer: the place they were in was shaken as by a mighty wind (Acts ii;) their hearts were filled with the powerful energy of the Holy Spirit, and they were instantaneously enabled to speak languages which till then they were unacquainted with. These inward powers were accompanied with the visible symbols of fiery tongues, which sat upon each of their heads: a fit emblem both of the new faculties they had received, and of the conquering, assimilating efficacy of the Spirit by whom they spoke; whose operations, like the fire, are vehement, penetrating, transforming, and diffusive; spreading from heart to heart, from place to place, till the flame, which was now confined within a few breasts, was com-

* [Tiberius, A. D. 33.] In fixing the dates of our history, I shall conform to what I think the most probable and authorised opinion, without perplexing either myself or my readers with the niceties of critical chronology.

municated to many nations, people, and languages.

The effects of this divine communication were immediately manifest; they were filled with love, joy, and faith, and began boldly and publicly to praise God. Their emotion and zeal could not be long unnoticed: those who first observed it, spoke of it to others, and a rumour was spread abroad. Jerusalem was at that time the occasional resort of the Jews and Jewish proselytes, who were dispersed throughout the known world, and multitudes had come from different countries to celebrate the feast. The promiscuous throng, who assembled upon the report, and had been accustomed to different languages, were therefore greatly astonished to hear of the wonderful works of God, every man in his own tongue. While some expressed their surprise at this, others ascribed it to the effects of wine, and showed their scorn and despite to the Spirit of grace, by reviling the apostles as drunkards. Thus they no sooner entered upon their public service, than they began to find the same treatment which their Lord had met with, and were, for his sake, the subjects of calumny and derision. This is a remarkable instance of the sagacity and temper which the men of the world discover in the judgment they form of a work of God; nor is it probable, that our modern reasoners would have judged more favourably, if they could have been present at such a scene, where several persons were speaking loud at the same time, and each in a different language: since they account the operations of the same Spirit, madness, and folly, even where they are not attended with such extraordinary circumstances.

This weak and perverse slander was immediately refuted by the apostle Peter, who addressed the people in a grave and solemn discourse; and, having in few words explained the nature of the fact, and shown that it was an accomplishment of ancient prophecies, he proceeded to apply himself more closely to their consciences. He assured them that what they saw and heard was wrought by the power of Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had rejected before Pilate. He informed them of that honour and glory which he now possessed, and charged them as accomplices in the murder of a person whose character and dignity God had vindicated by raising him from the dead. Though our Saviour had but few disciples during his personal ministry, he had doubtless left a deep impression of his words and works in the hearts of many. This discourse of Peter would naturally recall him to the remembrance of those who had seen him in the flesh, and led him to reflect how earnestly and unjustly they had, at the instigation of their priests, compelled Pilate to put him to death. These reflections, the closeness of Peter's address, and the power of the Spirit of God, concurred to give them a deep conviction of their sin; they were pierced to the heart, they no longer wondered as curious spectators, but were solicitous for themselves, and cried out, Brethren, what shall we do? Peter then proceeded to open the treasure of gospel-grace, and to direct them to Jesus, whom they had crucified, for salvation. The effect of this day's preaching (for though only Peter is named, it is probable, there were more than one preacher or one discourse) was signally happy. Three thousand souls were converted, and, professing their faith and repentance, were by baptism publicly joined to the church.

A further addition was soon after made: Peter and John having recovered a man from incurable lameness by faith in the name of Jesus, the report of the miracle brought a great concourse of people together a second time, Acts iii. Peter improved the occasion to preach to them at the temple gate, to the purport of his former discourse. He had an attentive auditory, and his word was made effectual to the conversion of many. But by this time the enemies of Jesus were greatly alarmed at the progress of his doctrine (Acts iv. 16, 47;) and having* notice of what had passed, the priests and Sadducees violently apprehended Peter, with John, and put them in prison. He had not finished his discourse; but he had said enough to be remembered; and this interruption, with the boldness of his following defence, made his words more regarded. The next day they were brought before the high-priest, rulers, and elders; and being asked concerning the late miracle, Peter, who once had trembled at the voice of a girl, was not afraid to use the utmost freedom and plainness with the council and heads of the Jewish nation. He confessed the name and cause of Jesus, reminded them of their wickedness in causing him to be crucified, and in direct answer to their question, assured them that the miracle was wrought in his name, and by his power. Though the council were highly offended with this language, and the more so, as they observed the persons who spoke were private and unlettered men; yet, being unable to deny the fact, for the man who had been lame stood before them, and unwilling to incur the odium of punishing an action they were ashamed to disapprove, they dissembled their rage, and forbidding the apostles to speak any more to the people, they dismissed them; yet they did

* Many consultations have been held, and devices framed, to stop the progress of the gospel, as if it were a dangerous infection But all such attempts are vain: they may as easily restrain the dawning of the day as suppress the spreading of the gospel. When the Lord is pleased to raise up fit instruments to promote it, and to vouchsafe a season of refreshment from his presence, then its influence cannot be restrained; a spark becomes a flame, a little one a multitude, and opposition only makes the effects more visible and noticed.

not depart until they had protested against this inhibition, and declared their resolution to obey God rather than men.

The believers though numerous, amounting to many thousands, lived in harmony and love, as children of one family. The greater part of them were poor; those therefore who had estates, or money, willingly put their all into a common stock for the use of the whole, which was entrusted to the care of the apostles. This is recorded as an instance of the benevolent and disinterested spirit with which the gospel inspired them, but it is not enjoined as a precedent to be universally observed, since we have many proofs, that the usual distinctions in civil life were retained in other churches planted by the apostles; and it soon gave occasion to discover, that in the best societies there may be found some unworthy intruders, and that very specious actions may be performed from base and dishonourable motives. Even under this richest dispensation of grace, there were some professors influenced by no higher motives than hypocrisy and vain glory. Ananias (Acts v,) with his wife Sapphira, attempted to impose on the apostles by a concerted lie, and would have had the praise of giving their whole substance, when their avarice would only permit them to spare a part. As a warning to all pretenders, who seek to join or serve the church from sordid or selfish views, Peter, by the direction of the Holy Ghost, denounced a severe sentence against this unhappy pair, and they both fell dead at his feet.* The cause and suddenness of their death was a vindication of the apostles' integrity and authority, and a seasonable admonition to others, to deter any from attempting to associate with the disciples, who were not in heart devoted to the Lord.

The numbers of the believers still increased, and the report of the apostles' doctrine and miracles extended from Jerusalem to the adjacent parts. The priests and Sadducees therefore soon renewed their efforts to suppress them: they apprehended the apostles again, and put them in the common prison as malefactors; but the Lord, to confirm the faith and courage of his people, and to show how easily he can protect those who serve him, delivered them the same night by his angel. In the morning, when their enemies were met, and commanded them to be brought to their tribunal, they were surprised to hear that the prison-doors were found secure, and the prisoners all escaped. They were, however, soon informed that they were not gone far, but were preaching boldly to the people, as the angel had directed them, regardless of their adversaries' designs against them. They were alarmed at this notice, and began to be apprehensive of the event;† yet, hurried on by their enmity to Jesus and his gospel, they once more sent their officers to take them, which they attempted in the mildest manner possible; for, as the prosecution was groundless and malicious, they were not without fear lest the multitude should interpose: but they had to do with the followers of Jesus, who would countenance no tumult in their own favour, and were neither afraid nor ashamed to confess his name in the face of danger. The apostles, therefore, peaceably yielded themselves, and being brought before the council, were severely questioned for disregarding the late prohibition they had received. Peter and the rest answered with their usual firmness; they avowed the fact, and their determination to persevere,‡ and charged them as betrayers and murderers of Jesus in stronger terms than before. The majority of the council were exceedingly enraged at their boldness: they were cut to the heart, and consulted to put them to death. But the more moderate advice of Gamaliel prevailed. He showed them, from some recent instances, that if this new sect was no more than a human institution, they need not give themselves trouble to suppress it, for it would soon sink and disappear of itself; but if it was indeed of God, their opposition would be not only in vain, but in effect a rebellion against God himself: he therefore recommended milder methods; and having considerable repute among them for his wisdom, the rest assented to him. In this manner the Lord, who has the hearts of all in his power, delivered the apostles a third time by raising them an advocate from amongst their enemies; yet, to save appearances, and that it might not be thought the council had proceeded so far without good cause, they were not dismissed till they had been scourged, and again enjoined silence. They departed, rejoicing that they had the honour to suffer disgrace for the sake of Christ,§ and re-

* The apostolic censures were not like the papal anathemas, *bruta fulmina*, words without effect; they were accomplished in an instant.—See Acts xiii. 12.

† Acts v. 24. It is not only a fruitless, but a very uneasy undertaking to fight against the truth, and those who profess it. The boldest and wisest champions in this desperate cause are often brought to their wits end, and to foresee their own disappointment.

‡ Peter and the apostles answered, "We ought to obey God rather than men." It should seem that this (if any) may be called a natural maxim, and that the rudest savage, or the least child that can be made to understand the terms, must assent to the truth of the proposition, as readily as they perceive that two and two make four; how strange then is it, that men of the greatest parts and penetration in other things so seldom receive it! There are few periods to be found, even in the christian church, in which those who steadily acted upon this principle were not considered as heretics of the worst sort.

§ Here were faith and love in exercise: to suffer reproach for Christ was in their esteem an honour and privilege. It is mournful to observe how little of this spirit is to be found amongst us How soon are we offended and troubled when our names are reproached! how uneasy to lie under contempt! how impatient to justify ourselves, and to be thought well of by all persons! Far from accounting it an honour to be made

turned to encourage their companions; continuing still publicly, and from house to house, to teach and preach in the name of Jesus.

These were happy times (Acts vi,) when the whole company of the faithful were of one heart and mind, firmly united in affection, sentiment, ordinance, and practice. Their adversaries, though angry, and desirous to injure them, were powerfully restrained by the Divine Providence: so that they enjoyed peace in the midst of war, and were favoured with much grace in their hearts, and a daily increase in their numbers. Yet it was not long before an occasion arose which might have had unhappy effects, if the wisdom and authority of the apostles had not provided an early remedy. The church, as yet, consisted only of Jewish believers; but these were distinguished into Jews properly so called, that is, natives and inhabitants of Judea, and Hellenists or Grecians, the name given to those of the Jewish race and profession who had been dispersed and settled in the Heathen countries. Many of these, as has been observed, were at that time in Jerusalem, and among the first converts of the gospel. As the multitude who were supplied out of the common stock was very great, it is no wonder if a few individuals were overlooked: some unavoidable instances of this sort gave rise to a complaint, not only of negligence, but partiality, in the distribution of the money; and the Hellenists, or strangers, thought the others had an undue preference shown them. The apostles, though upright and impartial, were unable to do every thing themselves; and therefore to prevent such mistakes and suspicions, and that they might devote their whole time and attention to the more important services of the ministry, they entirely divested themselves of the pecuniary charge; and, by their advice seven men were chosen, on whom, by prayer and imposition of hands, they solemnly devolved this trust. Thus the office of deacons was instituted. They were men full of wisdom and the Holy Ghost: and to them the care of the public money, and the support of the poor, was peculiarly confided. Some of them, perhaps all, were occasionally preachers; but this was no part of their office as deacons. By this expedient, the cause of murmuring was taken away, and the peace of the church confirmed.

TIBERIUS, A. D. 34.] Thus the gospel flourished in defiance of opposition. The Jews, provoked more and more, began to lose all patience; the mild counsels of Gamaliel could no longer restrain them, but their blinded passions hurried them to the last extremities. Stephen, one of the seven deacons newly elected, was the first who received the honour and crown of martyrdom. His zeal for the truth did not begin with his new office, though it is probable his undertaking that charge might place him more in view, and expose him more immediately to persecution. Promotions in the world are attended with worldly advantages; but such promotions in the church as are agreeable to the Spirit of God, will rather entitle a man to a larger share of labours and sufferings, and the painful pre-eminence of standing in the forefront of the battle, to sustain the hottest brunt of every storm. Stephen was no sooner a public person than he became the mark of public opposition. At first they pretended to dispute with him, but when they were unable to resist the wisdom and spirit by which he spake, they had recourse to more effectual methods to silence him; they suborned false witnesses, a main instrument of persecution, against him; and having framed such an accusation as was most likely to alarm the prejudice, and inflame the rage of the people, they brought him before the council, and charged him, that he had spoken blasphemous words against Moses and against God. Stephen, though alone, and unsupported in the midst of furious enemies, appeared firm and unmoved as a rock in the midst of the waves: he was not only devoid of fear, but filled with joy (Acts vii;) the testimony of a good conscience, the honour of suffering for his Lord, and a sense of the love of God shed abroad in his heart, not only preserved his soul in peace, but spread a lustre and glory upon his countenance, so that all who sat in the council, looking upon him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel. In such a disposition, he thought it not worth while to attempt his own defence, but employed the whole time allotted him in behalf of his adversaries, that, if possible, by a distinct view of God's dealing with their nation, and their behaviour towards him, he might engage them to consider their ways, to repent, and believe the gospel. While he spake of the things that had been long since transacted, and kept within the bounds of Moses, David, and Solomon, they had patience to hear him; but when he began to make application to themselves, with that warmth and plainness which the case required, they could bear no more: his words cut them to the heart: they no longer preserved the exterior gravity of their stations and characters, but gnashed at him with their teeth, as though they would have devoured him alive.

But vain are the attempts of men to intimidate those whom the Lord is pleased to comfort. He is always near to support his faithful servants, and can manifest himself in

conformable to Jesus in this respect, we feel it a burden which we are restless to shake off; yet it must be borne, or we must give up profession and all; for neither are our characters more respectable than the first Christians, nor is the world better reconciled to the things of God now than it was then.

a way which the world knows nothing of. Such a seasonable and sufficient discovery he made of himself to Stephen. As he looked steadfastly up to heaven, silently appealing from the injustice of his judges, he saw the heavens opened, and Jesus standing in glory at the right hand of God, as attending to all that passed, and ready to receive him to himself. Transported with this divine assurance, he was not at leisure to drop a single word to soften his incensed enemies; he endeavoured to communicate the glorious idea with which his soul was filled, and, without regarding the sure consequence of such a declaration, he told them plainly what he saw. This determined their resolves. Hitherto they had been willing to preserve the form at least of a judicial process; but now, renouncing every restraint, and unmindful of their late acknowledgment to Pilate, that it was not lawful for them to put any man to death, they stopped their ears to shut out any remonstrance that might be offered, dragged him violently out of the city, and stoned him to death. His dying deportment, which showed how eminently he was filled with the Spirit of Jesus, whom he saw, is recorded as a fit pattern for the imitation of all who should be called to suffer for the truth in succeeding times. He kneeled down with the sweetest composure, and, having committed his departing soul into his Redeemer's hands, his only remaining concern was for his murderers, and his last breath was a prayer that this sin might not be laid to their charge. Such resolution in the defence of truth, such calmness under sufferings, such tenderness and compassion towards those who oppose, are the surest marks of a high attainment in christianity.

The death of Stephen, far from satiating the rage of the rulers (Acts viii,) rather animated and excited them to new mischief. They observed no farther measures, but gave full vent to their cruelty, and raised a general persecution against the church. A young man named Saul, whom the Lord, from before his birth, had designed for a nobler service, was at this time one of their most zealous and active instruments; he had been a consenting spectator of Stephen's death, and kept the raiment of those that slew him. Encouraged by their example, he soon entered upon action himself, and made havoc of the church, forcibly entering into their houses, and dragging many to prison, both men and women. The disciples, therefore, according to their Lord's direction (Matt. x. 23,) gave way to the storm, and dispersed themselves throughout Judea and Samaria, spreading the knowledge of the gospel wherever they went. Thus the methods taken to suppress the truth proved (as they often have since) the means of promoting its progress; yet the Lord, who appoints limits beyond which the fiercest attempts of men cannot pass, preserved the apostles in safety at Jerusalem, where he had farther occasion for their service. Amongst the many who left the city was Philip, another of the deacons: he preached Christ and his gospel in Samaria, performed many cures and miracles among the people, and a great number received faith and were baptized. Here the gospel triumphed over the illusions of Simon, surnamed Magus, or the Sorcerer, who, by his vain arts and arrogant pretensions, had long held the people in subjection and astonishment. But the superior power of truth dispelled the charm; his votaries forsook him; and even the impostor himself was so far convinced that Philip acted by that divine power and authority to which he had only pretended, that he professed himself a believer likewise, and behaved so fairly, that Philip admitted him to baptism without suspicion; but when, soon after, Peter* and John came to Samaria to communicate the gifts of the Holy Ghost to the new disciples by imposition of hands, Simon discovered his true character: he offered money for a power to impart the same gifts; a proposal which showed his ignorance, wickedness, and ambition in the strongest light, and proved him an entire stranger to the grace of God. From him the hateful practice of merchandizing in spiritual concerns has derived the name of *Simony;* a crime which, though condemned by the laws of every christian country, as highly injurious and reproachful† to the gospel of Christ, no laws or obligations have hitherto been able to suppress. Peter severely rebuked his hypocrisy, yet exhorted him to repentance and prayer. His words seemed to have some weight with Simon for the present; but we hear no more of him among the believers: on the contrary, he is recorded in history as an inveterate enemy to the faith and purity of the gospel, and the author of those wild, absurd, and im-

* Acts viii. 14. "They sent Peter and John." We find nothing in this book to countenance the pre-eminence which the Papists ascribe to Peter. He and John were deputed by all the apostles, and went upon equal terms. Peter did not send John, nor go himself, without the advice and direction of the rest. John had once desired to call for fire from heaven upon the Samaritans; but he was now better instructed, and gladly went to impart to them the best gifts he could bestow. If the Lord is pleased to make any partakers of the same precious faith with ourselves, though they were once enemies, we should gladly forget all that is past, and receive them as dear brethren and intimate friends.

† In these abuses the church of Rome seems to derive rather from Simon Magus than from Simon Peter; yet it is to be wished such practices were confined to the church of Rome only. Our laws have guarded against them by a very solemn and circumstantial oath; but that this oath, if not literally broken, is often scandalously evaded, we need no other proof than the shameful advertisements which frequently appear in our public papers; not to say, that though there is no money in the case, yet all presentations, exchanges, and advancements that are transacted upon interested views, are so far simoniacal in the sight of him who judges the heart.

pure heresies which disturbed the first ages of the church.

About this time an eunuch, or great officer of Candace, Queen of Ethiopia, who had been worshipping at Jerusalem (which makes it probable that he was a proselyte to the faith of the God of Israel) was returning homeward. Though this nobleman had been at Jerusalem, he had either not heard of the apostles and their new doctrines, or, being influenced by the priests and rulers, had not thought them worthy his notice. He was going home ignorant as he came; but the Lord, who is mindful of his people when they think not of him, appoints the time and the means of bringing them to the knowledge of the truth; and these are often seemingly precarious and contingent, that the work may more clearly be known to be his, and the praise ascribed to his power and providence. Philip, by the direction of an angel, intercepted the Ethiopian upon the road: he found him well employed, reading the prophet Isaiah as he sat in his chariot: he had a very confused idea of the passage he was reading, but he knew it contained an important meaning, and was desirous to discover it. Those who have a just sense of the excellence of the scripture, and peruse it as he did with a sincere intention to be instructed by it, may be encouraged from this instance to persevere, though they find it at present hard to be understood: he who gave them the desire will in due time provide them a teacher, and make dark things plain to them. When Philip drew near, and asked him, without ceremony, if he understood what he read, he was not offended with the abruptness of his address, but courteously invited him to sit with him, confessing his ignorance and the need he had of assistance. The passage which had perplexed him afforded Philip a fair opportunity of preaching Jesus: the eunuch believed, and was baptized in a water they were passing by. In this case there seems to have been no exertion of an outward miracle to confirm the word. Nor was it necessary: the manner of Philip's meeting with him, the suitableness of the question to the dubious state of his mind, and the discovery he obtained, that the prophetical marks of the Messiah exactly coincided with the history of Jesus, afforded him sufficient evidence. The only extraordinary circumstance was the sudden disappearing of Philip, who, having performed his service, was removed by the power of the Spirit to Azotus, a place thirty miles distant; from whence, proceeding along the sea-coast, he preached at Joppa, Lydda, and all the intermediate places, till he came to Cæsarea. In the mean time the eunuch, rejoicing in the Lord's goodness, pursued his journey to Ethiopia. We have no farther account of him in the New Testament; but some ancient writers assure us that he was the means of propagating the faith which he had received, first in his own country, and afterwards in places still more remote.

TIBERIUS, A. D. 35.] The church having suffered much from the violence of the persecution, the Lord was pleased to afford them intermission, and to give a remarkable proof of the power of his grace (Acts ix,) by the conversion of Saul, one of their fiercest opposers. He had been educated a Pharisee, in a zealous attachment to the law, and, from a mistaken principle of conscience, thought it his duty to suppress the followers of Jesus. The warmth of his temper prompted him to uncommon earnestness against them; and as he was a young man, he was probably farther instigated by a desire to ingratiate himself with the Jewish rulers. Not content with the mischief he had done at Jerusalem, he still breathed out threatenings and slaughter against them, and meditated their destruction even in distant places. With this view he obtained letters of authority from the chief priests, and set out for Damascus, that if he found any disciples there, he might bring them bound with him to Jerusalem. Little was he aware of the event of his journey! Little did the believers imagine, that the man who now thirsted for their blood, would soon be their companion and leader! The Lord often permits those to whom he shows mercy, to run great previous lengths in their obstinacy and ignorance: their subsequent change is hereby more noticed, the riches of his grace are more remarkably exemplified for the encouragement of others; and such persons, from a lively sense of their past wickedness, and the undeserved favour they have received, are usually more strongly impressed with a sense of divine love, and more warmly devoted to his service. Some such there have been in every period of the church, and especially whenever there has been a remarkable revival of the power of godliness. When Saul was drawing near to Damascus, perhaps within sight of the city, anticipating his bloody designs, and exulting in thought over the defenceless sheep of Christ, whom he had been taught to consider as schismatics and heretics, who deserved to be extirpated from the face of the earth, he was suddenly surrounded by a glorious light, exceeding the brightness of the mid-day sun, and heard a voice, not of uncertain application, but expostulating with him by name, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" If he was alarmed at the question, he was much more so, when, upon asking, "Who art thou, Lord?" he was answered, "I am Jesus the Nazarene,* whom thou persecutest." So nearly is the Lord interested in his people,

* This is the exact import of the Greek, Ιησους ο Ναζωραιος, Acts xxii. 8.

and so dangerous is it to injure them: he accounts their cause, their sufferings, their enemies, his own. The Nazarene was an epithet of contempt affixed to the name of Jesus by those who hated him;* and it is probable that Saul had often spoke of him in these terms; but now he found himself in the Nazarene's power, and unable either to escape or to plead; he fell to the earth trembling and astonished beyond expression; he not only heard his voice, but saw his person (Acts ix. 27; 1 Cor. xv. 9;) an interview which he could not have sustained a moment, if the glory of Jesus had not been tempered with the milder beams of grace and love. The Lord spared him, accepted his feeble surrender of himself, moderated his fears, and dismissed him to Damascus as a willing trophy of his victorious grace, and a singular instance how easily he can subdue the hardest hearts to himself. The brightness of the vision had overpowered his bodily eyes, so that he was led by the hand; but the eyes of his mind were opened; his heart, his aims were changed; he was become a new man, and, instead of threatenings and slaughter, he now breathed prayer and devotion to Jesus, and love to his people. He remained at Damascus three days without sight or food: but the Lord remembered his distress, and sent to him a disciple named Ananias, who, from the character he had heard of him, was at first greatly surprised at the command he received to go to such a person; but the Lord condescended to acquaint him, that Saul was a chosen instrument, whom he had appointed to do and suffer great things for his sake. When Ananias laid his hands on him, a thick film, resembling scales, fell from his eyes; his sight was restored, his mind composed, and he was immediately baptized. Saul had several companions with him in his journey, who saw the dazzling light, heard the sound of the voice which spoke to him, and fell to the ground with surprise as he did; they knew enough of the circumstances of the case to witness for him, that he neither imposed upon others nor himself; but we have no account that any of them were converted, the most extraordinary occurrences being insufficient to change the heart, without the interposition of divine grace.

Thus the late persecuting Saul was numbered with the disciples, and soon distinguished himself amongst them: he now knew by experience the wickedness and danger of opposing the gospel, and was desirous to repair the mischief of his former rage and ill example. A sense of the mercy he had received, and compassion for the souls of others, made him seek every opportunity to persuade and convince the Jews, his former companions and brethren; but he soon found the same treatment from them, which he himself had often offered to the disciples. They opposed and vilified him as an apostate, and at length consulted to kill him: his former zeal in their cause was forgot, or, if remembered, it was an argument suited to inflame their resentment. But no counsel can prevail against those whom the Lord protects. Saul had timely notice of their designs, and because they watched the gates of the city incessantly, he was let down by a basket over the wall;† for though he neither distrusted his cause nor his protector, he was not unmindful to employ prudent means for his preservation. But before this he had made some excursions from Damascus, and visited Arabia; for his own words assure us, that it was not till the third year after his conversion that he returned to Jerusalem. In this interval the Lord, who had appeared to him in the way, by subsequent revelations, fully instructed him in the knowledge of his will, and qualified him for the apostolical office; so that he could afterwards say, that he received neither his authority nor his information from men. When he came to Jerusalem he would have joined himself to the disciples; but they, remembering his former conduct, and not clearly informed of the manner and reality of his change, were at first afraid of him. They had a right to be satisfied of his sincerity. But being soon afterwards introduced by Barnabas, he related to them the means of his conversion, and the occasion of his leaving Damascus. He continued for some time in Jerusalem and the neighbourhood, preaching and disputing in the name of the Lord Jesus. The Jews, who hated all the servants of Christ, could not but be particularly enraged at him, who had forsaken their party; against him, therefore, they chiefly set themselves, and making repeated attempts to kill him, he withdrew again from Judea, and went through Syria to Tarsus, in Cilicia, his native place.

CALIGULA, A. D. 38.] Upon his recess the churches in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee, had an interval of rest.‡ The Jews, about this

* And for this reason inserted in the title which Pilate put over his cross.

† 2 Cor. xi. 33. "Through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall." The Lord often confounds the pride of his enemies by the manner in which he delivers his servants: he permits violent oppositions, and great preparations to be made against them, and then disconcerts the combinations of the *many* and the mighty, by feeble and unthought-of means.

‡ The churches had rest, and walked in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, and were edified and multiplied, Acts ix. 31. Some well-meaning persons seem to forget this passage, when they take it for granted, that the work of God cannot flourish, except there is a violent outward opposition against it. The world will dislike the gospel; but it is possible in some measure to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men by well-doing; and the Lord can, and often does, favour his people with peace, and put their enemies under restraint.

time, were taken up with their own affairs. Caligula, who had lately succeeded Tiberius in the empire, presumed to arrogate divine worship to himself, and commanded altars and temples to be erected to his honour; he was readily obeyed in many places: but when he required his statue to be put up in the temple at Jerusalem, the Jewish nation engaged as one man to prevent it.* They had rejected the Holy One and the true, and the troubles were now beginning to take place, which ended at length in their total ruin and extirpation. Against this first affront and profanation intended to their temple, they united in earnest supplications to Petronius, the governor of Syria, and with much entreaty obtained permission to send their deputies to the Emperor, who was, though with great difficulty, prevailed on to desist from his purpose as to the temple; but at the same time he forbade them, under the severest penalties, to oppose the erection or dedication of temples to him, in any place without the city of Jerusalem. This injunction encouraged their enemies to affront their religion wherever they pleased, and laid a foundation for innumerable disturbances and dissensions, in which the Jews, whether aggressors or not, were always the greatest sufferers. While they were thus distracted among themselves, the believers enjoyed a favourable respite, and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, were edified and increased.

A. D. 39.] As Peter had formerly seconded the labours of Philip, the deacon, at Samaria, he now visited those places where he had preached on his way to Cæsarea, and strengthened the disciples he found there, by his doctrine and miracles. At Lydda† he restored a man to immediate health, who had been many years ill of a dropsy. Being afterwards invited to Joppa, he raised Tabitha, or Dorcas, to life, to the great joy of the poor and the widows, whom she had assisted by her alms and labours. While he made some stay here, his commission was enlarged, and he received direction from the Lord to communicate the gospel to the Gentiles, which had hitherto been restrained to the Jews, except in the case of the eunuch, for which Philip had been authorised by the express command of an angel.

When our Lord sent forth the apostles to preach while he was yet upon earth, he expressly confined their mission to the house of Israel; and though, after his resurrection, he commanded them to disciple all nations, they did not immediately understand the extent of his meaning; though they were under an infallible guidance, they were not fully instructed at once, but received intimations of their duty from time to time, as circumstances varied, and as the designs of Divine Providence were successively opening. The great Shepherd and Head of the church has an appointed time and manner for the accomplishment of all his purposes; nothing can be effectually done but when and where he pleases: but when his hour is come, then hard things become easy, and crooked things straight; his word, Spirit, and providence, then will all concur to make the path of duty plain to those who serve him, though perhaps, till this knowledge is necessary, he permits them to remain ignorant of what he has designed them for. By this discipline they are taught to depend entirely upon him, and are afterwards more fully assured that he has sent and succeeded them. Peter was not yet freed from the Jewish prejudice, that all intercourse with the Heathens was unlawful; or if he had been so himself, he could not have easily convinced the many thousands of his brethren who laboured under the same mistake. This service was therefore pointed out to him by means which left no room for doubt in his own mind, and enabled him fully to vindicate his conduct to others.

Cornelius (Acts x,) a Roman centurion, or captain, with his family and dependants, were the first fruits of the Gentile converts. He lived at Cæsarea, a city not far from Joppa, and which was the ordinary residence of the Roman governors; and therefore promiscuously inhabited by Gentiles and Jews. It is not probable that he had never heard of Christ, or the new institution that was spreading under his name; but, without doubt, what he knew of it was only from public rumour, in which the misrepresentations of malice, and the surmises of ignorance, usually so far prevail, that persons of the best dispositions are often deterred from making those inquiries which the importance of truth deserves. But the Lord, whom he knew not, had been gradually preparing him for the reception of the Gospel; he was already reclaimed from idolatry; he was a devout worshipper of God, exemplary in his family, just in his dealings, and charitable to the poor. How few of those now called christians can equal his character while a stranger to the gospel, we may collect from daily observation; yet those who plead for the sufficiency of what they style natural religion, would do well to observe, that though he was in many respects a good man, and his sincerity

* Josephus, de Bell. Jud. lib. 2.

† Acts ix. 32. "He came to the saints at Lydda." The scriptures do not use the word *saint* in the narrow and appropriate sense of some, or with that improper extent which others have given to it in after times; it is neither peculiar to apostles and fathers, nor applicable to all who bear it in the Roman calendar, but it is the common appellation of all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and are saved from sin and condemnation by his grace. There have been saints in all ages, but real saints (while living) have usually been branded with opprobrious names. The world, which knows not Christ, cannot distinguish his people, but will rather give the title of saints to many who have hated and persecuted the gospel.

was approved by God himself; yet he lacked one thing. But none who are made sincerely desirous to know the will of God, shall be left finally destitute: he will find a way to give them necessary information. Cornelius, who had often waited upon God by fasting and prayer, and had, doubtless, at times, felt that suspense and anxiety which can only be entirely removed by a clear knowledge of the gospel-covenant, obtained at length an illustrious answer; an angel appeared to him, assured him that his prayer was heard, and directed him to send for Peter, who should inform him more fully of his duty.

It is observable, that though the angel was so minutely exact in his directions, as to mention the street and the very house where Peter resided, he said not a word of the gospel to Cornelius, but referred him wholly to Peter. The wisdom and goodness of God is pleased to make his people instrumental in teaching each other. This not only secures the honour of the success to him alone, but it conduces to their comfort and advantage. An angel could only speak historically, that the thing is so; but it comes nearer to our level when delivered by men who have been in the very case of others, and can say experimentally, that they have found it so. Who so fit to commend the physician's skill and tenderness as those who have been themselves cured by him of a desperate disease? Peter had himself tasted that the Lord was gracious; he had greatly sinned, yet had been freely forgiven; he had seen his excellent glory upon the mount, and had received an express commission from his mouth. In these and other respects, he was a proper person to proclaim him to others, more so than an angel from heaven. We may therefore safely infer, *a fortiori*, that no man, however great his talents may otherwise be, can be qualified or fit to preach the gospel, until he has known the evil of sin himself, and been a partaker of the pardoning grace of God through a crucified Redeemer.

Cornelius was not disobedient to the heavenly vision: his example and instructions had been a blessing to his household, so that he had servants about him to whom he could communicate this extraordinary event, and depend on their fidelity. Having related his vision to them, he sent them to Joppa to invite Peter to his house.

When they departed from Cæsarea, Peter was under the influence of the national prejudice, which would hardly have permitted him to have gone with them; but, while they were on the journey, the Lord prepared his mind to comply. The time was now come,* when it was necessary he should know the extensive designs of God in favour of sinners of all nations, people, and languages; and that the partition wall between Jews and Gentiles was broken down and taken away by the death of Christ. He received this intimation by a vision, which exactly corresponded in its circumstances with the case in hand. About noon the following day, when the messengers were near to Joppa, he was retired to the top of the house, for the convenient exercise of secret prayer; and having an appetite for food, he saw, as it were, a large sheet or wrapper let down from heaven, suspended by the four corners, containing all sorts of beasts, birds, and reptiles, without any regard to the ceremonial distinction of clean and unclean; this appearance was accompanied with a voice directing him, To slay and eat. When he answered, That he had never yet transgressed the law, by eating unclean food; the voice replied, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common or unclean. To impress the whole upon his mind, and to convince him that the vision was real and significant, it was repeated three times. When it was finally withdrawn, and while he was thinking what it might import,† the men sent by Cornelius were inquiring for him at the door below: of which, receiving previous notice by the secret suggestion of the Spirit of God, and being directed to go with them without hesitation, he went down and spoke to them before they had time to send him word of their arrival by the people of the house. When he had heard their business, and compared the vision of Cornelius with his own, he scrupled no longer; but lodging the strangers that night, he accompanied them the next day, taking with him five of the brethren from Joppa, to be witnesses of what the Lord intended to do. Cornelius, who earnestly expected his arrival, had assembled his friends and dependants against his coming; he received Peter before them all with the greatest respect and cordiality, and gave him a particular account of what had passed, professing that both he and his friends were ready to receive and obey his instructions. Peter now perceived and acknowledged the great truth the Lord had pointed out by so many harmonising circumstances, that the blessings of the gospel were no longer to be confined to the Jews, but that Jesus was appointed to

* In the Lord's dispensations in favour of his people, there is often a counterpart, resembling that which is related in this chapter. The minds of two or more persons are inclined, by different means, to concur in the same design, though perhaps they are far asunder, and know nothing of each other's intentions: in time, circumstances fall out which connect their views, and prove that the whole was from the Lord.

† Peter was faithful to the light he had already received, and did not hastily follow the first impulse upon his mind; though the liberty seemed to be authorised by a voice from heaven, he did not accept it without consideration. His example should be considered by those who give themselves up to the influence of every sudden impression, without taking time to consider its nature and tendency, and how far it is consistent with the revealed will of God.

be a light to enlighten the Gentiles also, Acts x. 34.* In his discourse to them, he declared the person, character and offices of Jesus, who had been lately crucified, affirming himself to have been an eye-witness of what he related; he asserted his honour and authority as the Lord of all, the sovereign judge of the living and the dead; that he was the divine Saviour spoken of by the prophets, and that all who believed in his name should receive the remission of sin. Here we see the apostle's doctrine to the Gentiles was the same that he had preached at Jerusalem upon and after the day of Pentecost, and the same with what our Lord had declared concerning himself, a free and complete salvation by faith. He did not in the least attempt to accommodate his subject to any supposed prejudices of his new hearers, but faithfully acquitted himself of his message, and left the event to God. The mystery of Christ crucified, which was a stumbling-block to the Jews, was by many of the Gentiles accounted foolishness and absurdity; but the apostles proposed it simply and indifferently to all. In the present case, the success was (what has perhaps seldom happened) universal; the whole company believed, and received the Holy Ghost immediately, previous to baptism, and without the usual imposition of the apostle's hands. This signal attestation, with which the Lord honoured their faith, unanswerably removing every doubt concerning their fitness, Peter immediately directed them to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, through whom they had already received that inward and spiritual grace, of which baptism was the outward and visible sign.

When this affair was reported in Judea, it was not at first agreeable to those who knew not the warrant and grounds on which Peter had proceeded; so that when he returned to Jerusalem, he found himself under a necessity of vindicating (Acts xi) his conduct to the Jewish converts; a full proof that they did not think him infallible, or possessed of that superiority over the whole church which designing men, for promoting their own ends, have since ascribed to him. But though he was an apostle, and had acted by the express command of God, and though their expostulation seems to have been hasty and rough, yet he did not think it beneath him to give an orderly and circumstantial account of the whole business: they, on the other hand, were open to conviction; and, when they had heard his relation, they instantly acquiesced, and glorified God for his grace given to the Gentiles. This mutual condescension and ingenuousness preserved the first christians in peace, though they were not always exempted from mistakes and wrong impressions.

By this time the believers who had been dispersed by persecution had spread the gospel beyond the bounds of Judea and Galilee into Cyprus and Syria, and probably to more distant parts, particularly to Rome, which, being the centre and conflux of the empire, would hardly be long unvisited; however, in all places, the preaching of the word was confined to the Jews till Peter's mission to Cornelius afforded an authorised precedent for imparting it to the Heathens.

A. D. 40.] It was soon after publicly preached in Antioch, the capital of Syria, and no less eminent for luxury and depravity of manners; yet, amongst these dissolute and enslaved people, the gospel of Christ, accompanied with a divine power, was suddenly and remarkably prevalent to turn a great multitude from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God. The means of this happy change are expressly mentioned: What the philosophers had long attempted in vain, by cold encomiums on the beauty of virtue, was speedily effected by those who simply preached the Lord Jesus as the author, finisher, and fountain of salvation. When the news of this good beginning was brought to Jerusalem, the apostles sent Barnabas to Antioch; who, being a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost himself, was greatly rejoiced when he saw the numbers and sincerity of the converts, and animated them by his exhortations to cleave to the Lord with steady resolution; for he was sensible of what they perhaps were little aware of as yet, how many arts the enemy of souls employs to discourage those who are beginning to walk in Wisdom's ways. He afterwards went to Saul, and prevailed on him to leave Tarsus, and join with him in the service of the gospel at Antioch. By the Lord's blessing on the endeavours of these faithful labourers, the church was so greatly increased, that the believers there first received the general denomination of Christians; a significant and instructive appellation, strongly importing their duty and relation to Christ, and to each other, and

* Few passages of scripture seem to have been more misunderstood and misrepresented than this and the following verse. As some have presumed, that St. Paul's doctrine of justification is corrected if not confuted, by St. James; so the apostle Peter has been supposed to contradict both St Paul and himself (see 1 Pet. i. 1. 2) in another important truth of the gospel. This mistake is more excusable in those who do not understand the original; but those who do, ought not to avail themselves of an ambiguous word. The Greek προσωπος, from whence προσωπολημπτης is derived, does not convey the same idea that an English reader receives from the word *person*; it does not properly signify a personal identity, but the outward appearance and circumstance of a person or thing. Thus it is sometimes rendered *face*, as Matth. vi. 16. and many other places; and is applied to the sky or air, Matth. xvi. 3; *countenance*, Luke ix. 29; *presence*, 2 Cor. x 1; *fashion*, James i. 11. The meaning here is the same as in Coloss. iii. 25. The Lord is not moved by the outward distinctions and differences amongst men, to which we often pay regard: compare 1 Sam. xvi. 7. He neither receives or rejects any for being Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, bond or free, male or female, but is rich in mercy to all who call upon him.

has therefore universally obtained, and will probably subsist to the end of time. But though this name be accounted honourable with us, and has always been deemed, by those who truly deserve it, the noblest title, the highest style of man, it had not the same general estimation when first imposed: in the mouth of unbelievers, whether Jews or Heathens, it was a term of infamy and reproach, and expressive of the highest contempt,* and may be therefore ranked among the many opprobrious epithets by which the Lord's faithful followers have been marked out to the rage and scorn of the world.

Caligula having rendered himself universally odious by his inhumanity and caprice, was assassinated in his palace, in the fourth year of his reign.†

CLAUDIUS, A. D. 41.] He was succeeded by Claudius, who, soon after his entrance on the government, bestowed the kingdom of Judea on Herod Agrippa, a grandson of Herod, styled the Great (mentioned Matth. ii,) and nephew to Herod the Tetrarch, who put John the Baptist to death. This prince experienced much of that vicissitude which usually attends ambition: he had been detained in prison and chains by Tiberius, greatly favoured and advanced by Caligula, and now seemed to have attained the summit of his wishes; but, employing his power to persecute the church (Acts xii,) he was suddenly cut off in the height of his prosperity; for who can harden himself against the Lord and prosper? Herod was a professed zealot for the law of Moses and the Jewish institutions, and studied by every means to ingratiate himself with the people. He first expended vast sums in the defence and ornament of the city; but it was in his power to attempt a still more acceptable service, by exerting his authority against the people of Christ; and the motives of vanity and popularity, by which he was governed, prompted him to embrace the occasion. He began by apprehending the apostle James, the son of Zebedee, whom he hastily put to death; and, finding that the Jews were highly pleased with this step, he proceeded to imprison Peter, intending to delay his execution till after the Passover [A. D. 44,] that his zeal against these innovators might be applauded by a greater number of spectators. This stroke, though very afflictive to the church, was wisely permitted, to illustrate the courage and fidelity of the apostles: it showed that their miraculous powers, and high office, afforded them no sure exemption from persecution, but that they ventured and acted upon the same principles of faith and love to Jesus, in common with other believers. Thus James finished his course, and received the crown the first of the apostles. But Peter, being designed for farther services, was still safe, though to an eye of sense he seemed marked out for a speedy sacrifice: incessant prayer was made on his behalf by the disciples; and the united prayers of God's people have an efficacy which can be withstood by no human power: when he inclines them to join with earnestness and perseverance in prayer, it is because he has already determined to grant their petition. In this case the answer was signal, though not immediate. The night before Peter was to have been brought forth to suffer, he was sleeping between his keepers with that serenity which is peculiar to those who have a good cause, a good conscience, and a steady faith in God. Neither the inconveniences of a prison, nor the expectation of death, could discompose him, for he knew in whom he had believed; but he was awakened by an angel, who freed him from his chains, opened the prison-doors, and brought him into the street, unperceived by the guards. After the angel had thus set him at liberty, and was departed, Peter went to the house where his friends were at that instant praying for his deliverance. Thus they had a remarkable proof, that the Lord is indeed a God that heareth prayer; and it is recorded for our encouragement.

In the morning, Herod found himself disappointed of his prey. The guards, upon examination,‡ being unable to give an account of their prisoner, he commanded them to be put to death. It is probable that Herod, or his advisers, might suspect a miraculous interposition (as the apostles had been delivered the same way a few years before:) but to punish the keepers, as if they had been guilty of conniving at his escape, was the most likely method to stop farther inquiry, and prevent the people from supposing any thing extraordinary in the affair.

Herod did not long survive this event. He lived and died a monument of the instability of human greatness. He was much devoted to his Roman masters, and had a taste for their magnificence. This induced him to celebrate games and shows at Cæsarea, in honour of the emperor: here he laboured to display the utmost of his grandeur. His pride was farther flattered by the arrival of an embassy from Tyre and Sidon. These cities had incurred his displeasure; but as they chiefly drew their subsistence from his dominions, they were compelled to supplicate peace,

* ——Quos per flagitia invisos vulgus Christianos appellabat: auctor nominis ejus Christus, qui, Tiberio imperante, per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum suppliciis affectus erat.—*Tacitus, Ann.* 15.

† Josephus, Ant. lib. x.

‡ Herod examined them himself. It is probable he found strong reason to think Peter had been miraculously delivered; but, like a wise politician, he dissembled his conviction, and, to stifle all suspicion, wreaked his resentment upon the soldiers. They, without doubt, believed there was something extraordinary in the case, and might have said so if they had lived;—but dead men tell no tales.

which, though they had highly offended him, they obtained by their interest with Blastus his chamberlain. The king appointed a day to receive their submission, when he appeared with a splendour that dazzled the eyes of the spectators: he addressed himself to the ambassadors in a pompous oration, suited, we may suppose, to give them the highest idea both of his power and his clemency. When he had ended, he heard his praises resound from every quarter: the multitude shouted, It is the voice of a God, not of a man. His vain heart was elated with this impious compliment, which indeed was no more than had often been used upon such occasions among the Heathens; but when it was now adopted by those who professed a knowledge of the true God, the proud worm, who durst be pleased with it, was made a sudden and awful example of the divine displeasure: the avenging angel of the Lord smote him with an irresistible, though invisible stroke; and, while surrounded with the fancied insignia of majesty, and in the midst of their idolatrous acclamations, he found and confessed himself a mortal. He was seized with excruciating pains, and expired in a few days, being in a manner devoured by vermin bred from his bowels. With his death the persecution ceased. He perished, and was quickly forgot; but the word of God, which he had attempted to suppress, grew and multiplied as before.

The church of Antioch during this time greatly increased, and enjoyed the benefit of many excellent teachers, some of whom were endued with a prophetical spirit, by which the Lord intimated his will to them in particular cases. In this way they had been informed of an approaching dearth, and, as seasons of scarcity would severely affect the disciples in Judea, who laboured under peculiar difficulties, they cheerfully contributed to their relief, and sent the collection to Jerusalem by Saul and Barnabas, who, having fulfilled their commission, returned to Antioch about this time. [A. D. 45.] These two were soon afterwards (Acts xiii.) appointed by an express revelation to propagate the knowledge of the gospel in other countries: they were set apart to this service by the solemn prayers of the church, and attended by John, surnamed Mark, who had accompanied them from Jerusalem. Thus they went forth, like Abraham, uncertain whither they were to go, but assured of an infallible guidance and power to direct and prepare the way.

It is generally believed that, nearly about the same time, the apostles at Jerusalem likewise separated to preach the gospel in the districts respectively allotted them by the direction of the Holy Spirit; and we have some account from antiquity of their several provinces, according to which they divided among them the greatest part of the known world, from India to Barbary, and from Abyssinia to Scythia. Indeed there is no doubt but they executed their commission as apostles, and spread the gospel far and wide; but the particulars recorded of their labours, sufferings, and circuits are not transmitted with such authenticity and clearness as to give entire satisfaction. The only certain history we have of the apostolic age, is that of Luke, which we call the Acts of the Apostles; and this, from the period we are now come to, is confined to those events in which Paul was personally concerned, and does not even carry on his history to the end of his life. The wisdom of God having given us, both in the life of Jesus and of his first servants, rather a specimen sufficient for our instruction than a complete history to gratify our curiosity, to this plan we shall conform; and while we have the light of an inspired writer, we shall not wander after the glimmerings of tradition. I shall therefore, in the progress of this chapter, confine myself to the Evangelist's narration, so far as it goes, and, when he leaves us, it will be sufficient to comprise, in a very narrow compass, the most certain or most probable incidents which we can recover to complete the records of the first century.

Saul and Barnabas embarked at Seleucia, a sea-port in the neighbourhood of Antioch, and sailed to Cyprus: they landed at Salamis, on the east side, and proceeded through the island to Paphos, in the west, making the first tender of the gospel in every place to the Jews. At Paphos the Roman governor, Sergius Paulus, was desirous to hear the apostles' doctrine: he was attended by Elymas, a pretended magician and prophet, who fearing the discovery of his impostures, laboured to divert the governor from his purpose, and to prejudice him against them. But Saul sharply rebuked his wickedness, and, by the impulse of the Holy Spirit,* denounced a sentence against him, suitable to his crime; he who endeavoured to detain others in darkness and ignorance, was suddenly struck blind himself. This punishment, which he could neither foresee nor avoid, discovered the vanity of his claims, and convinced the governor, that the preachers spoke by an authority superior to their own; he therefore attended more carefully to their words, and became soon a partaker of their faith.

From Cyprus they sailed to Perga, in

* It is expressly said, that Saul or Paul was filled with the Holy Ghost; therefore the severe expressions in his reprimand were not the effects of intemperate anger, but a solemn declaration of the sorcerer's true character: yet it is safer to imitate the apostle in his patience and humility, than in this singular instance. The power of God, which accompanied his words, proved by what impulse and authority he spoke. We, who are not apostles, and who make no claim to apostolic power, shall act more in character to conform to the general rule St. Paul has given us, 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.

Pamphylia; where their attendant Mark, either already wearied with fatigue, or apprehensive of greater difficulties, or from a fickleness and levity of temper, would proceed no farther with them, but returned to Jerusalem. By this indiscretion he not only lost many valuable opportunities, which he afterwards regretted, but in the end gave occasion to a great difference between Barnabas and Paul. Such is the state of humanity, that those persons in a society who cannot do much good, are often, by their imprudence, the cause of much harm, even where they intend otherwise. From Perga they proceeded to Antioch, in Pisidia, and entered into the synagogue. [A. D. 46.] Their habit and manners bespoke them Jews; but, perhaps, the rulers of the synagogue were not apprised of their character. When the ordinary service was finished, they were desired to propound their sentiments. Paul, who was usually the speaker, addressed them in a long discourse, a valuable abstract of which is preserved to us. In his introduction, he reminded them of their ancient history and prophecies; but the sum and substance of his sermon was Jesus. He proved from the scripture that he was the Messiah, in whom the promises centred, and proposed him to all as the great object of faith through whom, and by whom alone, forgiveness of sin was to be obtained, and a free justification from those offences for which the law of Moses had made no provision. In the close he solemnly warned them of the danger of rejecting this Saviour and his gospel. His discourse made no great impression upon the Jews; but some of the Heathens who had been occasionally present, desired to hear the matter farther explained. Accordingly, on the next Sabbath, almost the whole city was collected to hear the gospel, which exceedingly offended the Jews, and prompted them to interpose with cavil and abuse. The apostles then told them, in plain terms, that though their message was first to them, yet, since they refused to receive it, they would henceforth freely proclaim it to the Heathens, from whom they expected a more favourable hearing; nor were they disappointed in their hope, for many of the latter received the word with joy, both in the city and adjacent country.* The Jews, farther exasperated by this success, so wrought upon the passions and prejudices of some persons of influence, both men and women, who were probably proselytes, and superstitiously devoted to their new profession, that Paul and Barnabas were violently compelled to depart; but they left behind them disciples, the fruits of their ministry, who were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit, and thereby enabled to maintain the faith, though their teachers were forced from them.

The apostles, shaking off the dust of their feet (as our Lord had commanded,) for a testimony against the obstinate infidelity of the Jews, went from thence to Iconium, the chief city of Lycaonia, where they made many converts, both Jews and Gentiles. But the Jews who believed not, actuated by the same spirit in every place, opposed them earnestly;* yet they staid so long, and met with such success, that the city was divided, a part holding with them, and a part influenced by their enemies, who from thence took occasion to represent them to the magistrates as disturbers of the public peace; a charge which has often been falsely urged against the ministers of the gospel. At length their adversaries prevailed, and violent measures were resolved on; but they, having notice of it, withdrew in time to Lystra, in the same province, where they pursued their ministry with their usual zeal and firmness, without being deterred by the opposition they had already met with, or were likely to meet in every place. Among their hearers at Lystra, there was one who had been a cripple from his birth. Paul, observing his attention, and some indications of faith in his behaviour, was directed to confirm the doctrine of Jesus by a signal miracle. He commanded the lame man to stand upright upon his feet; and his word was accompanied with immediate power: the man, who had never walked, instantly sprang up, and possessed the perfect use of his limbs. It appeared, from this instance, that though miracles have a tendency to rouse the attention, and are a proof of a power beyond the ordinary course of things, yet they cannot, of themselves, inform or convince the mind of truth: for the ignorant multitude, though greatly struck with what they saw, were so far from believing the apostle's doctrine, on the evidence of this miracle, that they endeavoured to account for it on their own idolatrous principles: they forgot all they had heard of Jesus, and cried out, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. Agreeable to their blinded notions, they called Barnabas, *Jupiter*, and Paul, *Mercury;* imagining something in them peculiarly characteristic of those fabulous deities. In the warmth of

* When the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy. Among the clamours raised against persons and doctrines in our own time, some have not been ashamed to allege the great concourse of people usually attending, as a sufficient objection, forgetting (as it should seem,) that this was one circumstance that provoked and instigated the enemies of Christianity from the beginning, John vii. 40, 48, and xi. 48, and xii. 9.

* Acts xiv. 2. "The Jews stirred up the people." There is a natural enmity in the hearts of some men, but in many it is dormant; they are engaged in business and pleasure, and would be content to let the people of God alone, as unworthy their notice; these must be stirred up by the more zealous to join in the common cause: and accordingly no pains or misrepresentations are spared to rouse them from their indolence.

their superstition, they assembled with their high priest and victims,* and would have offered sacrifices to the men who came to turn them from dumb idols to serve the living God. But nothing gives the faithful ministers of Christ greater pain, than to have any part of that honour or dependence addressed to themselves, which they are desirous wholly to engage for their Lord and Master. Paul and Barnabas, who had suffered persecution and ill-treatment with patience, were transported beyond their usual bounds at these marks of ignorant applause; they rushed in among the people, confessed their own infirmities, boldly reproved their blind idolatry, and directed them where alone their thanks and worship were due; yet with all they could say, they hardly prevailed on them to desist. It was happy for them that they sought not their own glory, and could not be elated with the applause of men. Poor and precarious is the reward of those who aim no higher than this; for, as the tide, after running a while violently one way, soon afterwards by degrees reverts to the contrary extreme; so inconstant is the praise and regard of the unthinking many, who are governed by appearances, and susceptive of every new impression. Some of the restless Jews followed the apostles from Iconium, and, by their insinuations, prevailed on the same people to treat those as malefactors, whom a little before they had revered as deities: they tumultuously assaulted Paul (who, being the chief speaker, was usually the chief sufferer,) stoned him, and dragged him out of the city, supposing they had killed him; but the Lord, to whom the issues of life and death belong, restored him, and healed his bruises, so that he rose up while the disciples were sorrowfully standing round him; and having entered into the city, to show that he was neither dead nor intimidated, he was enabled to accompany Barnabas the next day to Derbe.

Here they continued some time, and taught many; and this was the boundary of their present progress. From hence they returned, regardless of their enemies, to the places they had been at before, to Lystra, Iconium, Antioch, and Perga, confirming the believers, forming them into societies, and constituting elders and pastors, from amongst themselves, in every church. In all places they took care to instruct the believers in the nature of their profession, and reminded them of an unalterable necessity, in the present constitution of things, that through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God,† Acts xiv. 22. After this, recommending the new converts to the grace and care of the Lord, in whom they had believed, they again took shipping, and returned to Antioch in Syria. Upon their arrival, they assembled the whole church, and gave them a particular account of all that the Lord had done for them, and by them, in their late circuit. [A. D. 47.] This is the news which believers delight to relate and hear: the traverses of policy, or the events of war, the usual topics of conversation, afford them but little entertainment; but it rejoices their hearts to be informed of new accessions to the Redeemer's kingdom, and to see how his wisdom and grace triumph over all opposition.

Hitherto the church had only to struggle with outward difficulties; but as human nature is always the same, and the apostolical times were to transmit instruction to the people of God in every succeeding period, mistakes, disputes, and divisions were, by degrees, permitted to take place among professed believers. If it had not been so, we might not only have been discouraged by the great disparity between the first christians, and those who have lived since; but for want of rules and precedents of sufficient authority, we should have been continually at a loss how to oppose and confute the various errors which have appeared and been revived during so many centuries: the Divine Wisdom therefore thought fit to suffer every false and dangerous notion, whereby the enemy of souls would at any time attempt to corrupt the simplicity of the faith, to make its first entrance while the apostles were yet living, that we might have their instructions and examples to guide us in every emergency. However paradoxical it may seem, we hope, in a proper place, to show, that no new opinion, either right or wrong, respecting the faith in Christ, has been started since the close of the scriptural canon. As the gospel, that good and perfect gift, came down from the Father of

* The high priest was probably willing to avail himself of the superstition of the people, and thought it a favourable occasion to establish the belief of a peculiar sanctity and virtue in the temple at Lystra, which might increase the number of votaries, and promote his own wealth and influence, just as a legendary report of the appearance or miracles of some saint, or angel, has been improved to procure a veneration for particular cities or temples in Christian countries.

† That this was the case in the primitive times is generally allowed; but we have been told by some, that things are now greatly altered in this respect; they would persuade us, that our Lord's words (Matt. vii. 13.) are no longer in force; that the way to the kingdom, in our happy days, is broad, spacious, smooth, and thronged by multitudes,—the very characters he has given us of the road to destruction. Such teachers and writers are little aware how they proclaim their own ignorance. If they knew the spirit of enmity which the world bears to true christianity,—the trials with which the Lord visits his people, to prove and exercise their faith,—the assaults and temptations they endure from the powers of darkness,—the griefs they feel from a sense of their own unfaithfulness and unfruitfulness,—the fightings without, and fears within, which are more or less experienced in the christian life—if they knew these things, they would speak otherwise. The beaten way to honours and preferments is, perhaps, free from these tribulations; but not so the way that will lead to the kingdom of God.

lights complete, and has received no amendment from the hands through which it has successively passed,—so, on the other hand, the grand deceiver exerted all his force against it, and availed himself of all his influence on the ignorance and wickedness of men from the very beginning, and has no subtle devices in reserve now, having tried his utmost resources over and over. It is true, length of time, and change of circumstances, have afforded him opportunities of placing his delusions in various lights, and have given some of his schemes a seeming strength and establishment which they had not at first; but as a man attained to his full stature and vigour, is the same individual person that was once an infant, unable to stand alone, so there neither is, nor has been, any erroneous principle, however authorised or recommended, or perhaps applauded as a new discovery, by those who are ignorant of scripture and antiquity, but we can, from express passages in the apostles' writings, show that the same existed in their time, though in a more feeble and infantile state. This point we are to illustrate more at large hereafter; at present I am only concerned to take notice of a dissension that arose among the believers at Antioch, not long after the return of Saul and Barnabas, which made their presence there particularly useful. This was occasioned by some Judaising professors, who came down from Judea, and taught the Gentile converts, that except they were circumcised, and kept the law of Moses, they could not be saved. This dangerous position, arising from a misapprehension of the righteousness of Christ, as the only ground of a sinner's acceptance with God, and tending to substitute a quicksand for the foundation of hope, instead of the immoveable rock which God has laid in Zion, was warmly opposed by these apostles of the Gentiles; they had a double conviction of its falsehood, both from the nature of the faith they had received themselves, and the effects of the gospel they had imparted to others; but many weaker minds, having less experience of the work of grace in their own hearts, and less acquaintance with what the Lord had wrought in others, were staggered. When, therefore, after many debates, the point was not settled to satisfaction, it was resolved to depute Paul and Barnabas to consult the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. [A. D. 49.] If this, as seems probable, was the journey St. Paul refers to in Gal. ii. they were directed to take this step by the Spirit of God; since he there says, that he went up to Jerusalem by, or in consequence of, a revelation. They were accompanied by some brethren; and in every place where they found believers, they comforted them with the account of their late progress. At Jerusalem they were cordially received; and having declared the happy fruits of their preaching to the Heathens, though they had not attempted to bind them to the Mosaic law, they proceeded to declare the tenet which had been lately advanced, and their motives for opposing it. They soon found persons of the same legal spirit, who justified and repeated the obligation of the ceremonial law upon all who embraced the gospel. Upon this, a particular day was named for the whole assembly to meet, and discuss the question. In this convention there was the highest room to expect, that the Spirit of God would influence their resolves, and guard them from giving their sanction to an error; and he did so; yet not by an audible voice or instantaneous impulse, but by presiding over their debates, and enabling them, in the conclusion, to collect and pronounce the true state of the question with infallible evidence and certainty. Here again it is plain, that Peter little thought himself entitled to that supreme prerogative, as the immediate vicar of Jesus Christ, which his pretended successors falsely ascribe to him; nor did his brethren remind him of his privilege, otherwise there could have been no debate, for his declaration would have been decisive; but waving the claim of authority, he argued the insignificance of the Jewish rites as to salvation, from the Lord's conduct towards Cornelius and his friends, by his ministry. These were the first Gentile converts; and in this instance, he said, the Lord had fully declared his mind, making no difference between Jew and Gentile, purifying their hearts by faith in his blood, and imparting to them those substantial blessings, of which the ceremonial law exhibited no more than the shadow; and which, in comparison of the liberty of the gospel, he termed *an unnecessary yoke, too heavy to be borne.* The assembly then kept silence, while Paul and Barnabas related more at large the fruits of their late mission among the Heathens. The conference was closed, and the determination given, not by Peter, but by James, who asserted the Gentiles' freedom from the Jewish yoke, and enjoined them only to abstain from fornication, from things offered to idols, and from blood. The two latter points were necessary to preserve a friendly intercourse between the Gentile and Jewish converts, so long as these were indulged in observing the Levitical institutions; and the prohibition from fornication, though immediately belonging to the moral law, which was of universal obligation, was added, to give the Gentiles a deeper sense of the guilt and evil of a practice, which the most civilized and virtuous Heathens considered as almost, if not wholly, innocent.

This sentence was generally embraced;

and a letter to the same effect was written to the believers at Antioch, confirming them in their christian liberty. In this they thought it a sufficient condemnation of the opposite opinion to say, They had given no such commandment: a protestation the apostles might have often repeated had they lived to this day: but since their genuine writings still subsist, we may, by parity of reason, still infer, that we need not be afraid of rejecting any thing that is enjoined as binding upon the conscience, if we can be sure that the apostles, who were divinely inspired to explain the christian faith and practice, have given us no precept in its favour. They likewise took care to assert their firm persuasion, that their decision was agreeable to the dictates of the Holy Spirit. This convocation has generally been styled the first christian council; but indeed, when we compare it with those which bore the same name afterwards, and were professedly formed upon this precedent, we shall be almost tempted to say, that it was not only the first, but the last. Here were no intrigues practised, no temporal interests consulted, no fierce and bloody anathemas issued, to give a sanction to persecution, no uncertainty or animosity in the issue; but the affair was conducted with freedom and moderation, and the conclusion made by general consent, and to the satisfaction of both parties. How different in these respects from the spirit of after times! But though this answered the end in the present case, the judgment of the apostles was not entirely obeyed, even while they lived. This debate was revived in other places, and proved a frequent impediment to the peace of the church, so long at least as the temple and worship of Jerusalem continued, and gave St. Paul occasion to write his epistle to the Galatians expressly on this subject; nay, it seems the mistake still subsisted in Judea, though none publicly ventured to contradict the decree when it was made; for when, some time after, Peter went to Antioch, and conversed (Gal. ii. 11,) freely with the Gentile converts, living after their manner for a season, yet, when some brethren came down from Jerusalem, he was so fearful to offend them in this matter, that he separated himself again, and, by his influence, prevailed on Barnabas likewise to dissemble in favour of those of the circumcision. For this weak compliance, whereby he seemed to overthrow what he had before established, St. Paul withstood him to his face: he did not detract from his character by insinuations to his prejudice behind his back, nor did he content himself with reproving him in secret; but as the offence was public, tending to confirm the Jews in their bigotry, and to offend the weak on both sides, he boldly and publicly rebuked him before them all. Strange weakness, incident to the best of men! that Peter, who had first laid aside his prejudices, who had visited the Gentiles by divine direction, had seen the happy effects of his compliance, and vindicated his own conduct so unanswerably upon a late occasion, should now shrink and trifle, expose himself, and grieve his brethren, through fear of those who came from Jerusalem! To be delivered from the fear of man is a deliverance indeed! It was happy for Peter that he had, in his brother Paul, a faithful friend, who, by a few well-timed words, broke the chain, and set him at liberty. It is surprising that any who have read this passage should dream of fixing on Peter, above any other of the apostles, to be the supreme and infallible head of the christian church.

Justus and Silas, two of the brethren, were sent with Barnabas and Paul to accompany the letter, and to declare the purport of it more at large. They were gladly received at Antioch, and not only confirmed the peace of the church, but were further helpful to their faith, by the singular gifts with which the Lord had honoured them. In a little time Justus returned to Jerusalem, but Silas chose to continue longer, and was afterwards the constant companion of St. Paul in his travels.

A. D. 50.] This obstacle being removed, the gospel flourished greatly at Antioch. But, amidst all their services and success there, Paul and Barnabas could not forget the converts they had left in Cyprus and Asia Minor. They proposed therefore to make them a second visit, to comfort them, and to see how the work had prospered in their absence: but a difficulty was started concerning John, surnamed Mark, who had formerly left them at Perga; and having probably repented of his irresolution, was now desirous to proceed with them again. Paul warmly opposed this, thinking him highly culpable for his inconstancy, and perhaps too much influenced against him by a spirit of resentment not wholly excusable. On the other hand, Barnabas undertook his apology; in which, besides his tenderness to his fault, he seems to have been moved by considerations which ought to have no place where the service of God is concerned. John was his sister's son; and this led him to consider his conduct in the most favourable light. Thus they were both a little partial in the cause; but much more wrong in the issue; for the contention became so sharp between them, that it broke their harmony. They determined to part. Accordingly, Barnabas took Mark, whose company he had dearly purchased by the loss of Paul's, and sailed to Cyprus, his native place; and Paul, choosing Silas in his room, went through Syria and Cilicia, being recommended to the Lord by the prayers of the brethren. So that their former work was now divided between them.

I must venture to digress here a little for the sake of two remarks, of which the course of our history may often remind the reader. 1. How small an occasion will discover human infirmity even in the brightest characters! Not all the graces of Paul and Barnabas, nor the remembrance of the services and difficulties they had jointly experienced, nor the importance of the common cause in which they were engaged, nor the fear of giving offence to the world and to the church, could restrain these dear friends, fellow-labourers, and fellow-sufferers, from contending and separating about a trifle. 2. How wise is the over-ruling providence of God, permitting such things for the trial of some, the instruction of others, and the better carrying on his own designs! In succeeding revivals of religion, the like differences* have sometimes taken place among the main instruments, and from as trivial causes; and though they have not obtained without fault in some, and inconvenience to many; yet the event has proved them no hinderance upon the whole. The work has become more diffusive, and more incontestible, when persons of different tempers, sentiments, and talents, who seemed to superficial observers as the heads of different parties, have laboured with equal zeal and success in advancing the one great design of the gospel. As a skilful gardener raises many plants in a little spot of ground, and removes them afterwards to places where they will have more room to grow and flourish; so they who are designed for extensive usefulness, are often first reared within a little compass, within the sight and knowledge of each other, where they are sheltered and strengthened, while tender, by their mutual advices, prayers, and examples, and seem to have only one heart and one mind. But were they always to continue thus closely connected, no one would have room to expand according to the measure of gifts and services which the Lord has appointed them; therefore they are thinned and transplanted: either persecutions from without, or weaknesses, mistakes, or jealousies among themselves, scatter them afar, to places and undertakings they had no thoughts of, and which would not have been otherwise attempted.

The apostle Paul, with his companion Silas (Acts xvi,) proceeded, as has been mentioned, through Syria and Cilicia, to the parts he had formerly visited. When he came to Lystra, he chose Timothy for his associate and companion in his journey, who it is probable had been converted by his ministry, and a witness to his sufferings for the gospel when he was there before. Timothy was of Jewish extract by the mother's side, and carefully educated from his infancy in the knowledge of the scriptures; but his father was a Greek. This circumstance being generally known to the Jews, and likely to render him less acceptable among them, Paul, to obviate their prejudices, directed him to be circumcised; thus showing his readiness to become all things to all men, so far as was consistent with a good conscience, and conducive to edification: for though, when the observance of the Mosaic law was insisted on as necessary to salvation, he steadily opposed it, and would not admit the least addition to the doctrine of free justification by the blood of Christ, he was willing to permit it to the Jewish converts in their present situation, and to accommodate himself to their weakness, for their advantage. He had before withstood the circumcision of Titus, who was a Gentile, when it was urged as a necessary point; but now that debate was settled in favour of gospel-liberty: he proposed the circumcision of Timothy himself. The seeming inconsistence of his conduct vanishes, if the difference of the two cases is rightly understood; but those who act from the most enlarged principles, who know when and in what points resolution is necessary, and when and how far it is expedient to yield to others, will always be thought inconstant and inconsistent by the zealots of parties. In the course of his progress, he delivered in every city, the decree lately determined at Jerusalem, which, though primarily directed to Antioch, was of equal force, as a rule and bond of peace, in all places where there were both Jewish and Gentile converts. Thus, having watered his former planting, he proceeded to preach in Phrygia and Galatia. The route of the gospel was directed by the Spirit of God, who restrained the apostle from entering the province which is called, by way of distinction, the Proconsular Asia, of which Ephesus was the capital: not that this country was to be excluded from the knowledge of Christ; for St. Paul preached in many parts of it afterwards with great success (Acts xix. 10;) but the proper season was not yet come, the Lord having an important service for them first in another place. For the same reason, and by the same influence, they were prevented going into Bithynia, which they had some thoughts of attempting. Thus, in a manner undetermined where they were to labour, they came to Troas, a sea-port in the Archipelago; and when their journey was now bounded by the sea, they received a further intimation of the Lord's will, and found that he had been leading them in the right way; for they were brought to a port proper for embarking to the

* To mention only one by anticipation,—the unhappy dispute between Luther and Zuinglius, and their respective followers, concerning the words, "This is my body." The difference between them was little more than imaginary; but the mischiefs it occasioned were real, important, and numerous, and would probably have stifled the Reformation in its birth, if it had not been so remarkably under an almighty protection.

place where the Lord had designed to send them.

A. D. 51.] Here St. Paul had a vision by night, of a man standing by him, whose garb and expression intimated his country, and entreating him, saying, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us." This vision was attended with such circumstances as left no room to doubt either its origin or meaning; so that, when he had communicated it to his companions, they assuredly collected, that the Lord called them into Macedonia. Accordingly they took shipping, and having a favourable wind, they soon arrived at Neapolis; from whence they proceeded by land to Philippi, a place of note, and a Roman colony. Their preaching and continuance in this city, which, in time, became the seat of a flourishing church, was productive of certain interesting and important events.

On the Sabbath-day they went out of the city to a place by the river side (a usual resort of the Jews for the exercise of public prayer,) where, meeting with some women, as it should seem, before the rest were assembled, they spake freely of the great subject which was always uppermost in their hearts and mouths. One of them, named Lydia, a native of Thyatira, and then resident at Philippi, gave a peculiar attention to St. Paul's discourse: the reason is assigned, the Lord opened her heart. The rest heard the same words; but the hearts of all are dull, contracted, and averse to spiritual truths, so that, without a divine interposition, the most powerful speakers speak in vain. Lydia heard to good purpose: she believed, and was immediately baptized, with her family, and gladly received the messengers of gospel-grace into her house.

Continuing to preach in this place so long as they remained at Philippi, they were often met by a young woman under the influence of an evil spirit, who, as they passed by, cried after them, These men are the servants of the Most High God, who declare unto us the way of salvation, in like manner as the demoniacs had sometimes confessed our Saviour's authority and mission. It may seem strange that an evil spirit should testify in favour of the preachers of the gospel: but perhaps it was either to make them suspected of a confederacy, or to draw them into a snare. However, when this had been often repeated, St. Paul, who could not bear to be spoken well of by a spirit which was not of God, commanded him, in the name of Jesus, to quit his possession. The spirit, compelled to obey, left the woman instantly. But this opened a way to give them disturbance in another manner. Her masters, to whom she had formerly brought great profit by her divining talent, finding she was no longer willing or able to procure them advantage by that means, apprehended Paul and Silas, as the chief instruments of their loss, and brought them before the magistrates with the heavy charge (which is usually revived when the preaching of the gospel interferes with the views of interest,) that they exceedingly disturbed the peace of the city, by attempting innovations contrary to the established religion: they styled them Jews to the Romans, on account of their open abhorrence of idol-worship, which was carefully supported by the Roman laws and customs. The unthinking multitude soon joined in the alarm, and the magistrates, easily prejudiced by the terms of the accusation, instead of acting as impartial judges, declared themselves parties in the affair. Without examining into particulars, they violently tore off the clothes of Paul and Silas; and, having caused them to be beat with many stripes, they cast them into prison, giving the jailor a particular charge to keep them safely. This command was executed with severity. He thrust them into the inner prison, and fastened their feet in the stocks. But no walls or dungeons can exclude those comforts of God's Spirit which are promised to those who suffer for righteousness sake, and which are able to overpower the sense of every inconvenience. Paul and Silas were so little discomposed by this cruel treatment, that they joyfully sung hymns of praise to God, and were heard by the other prisoners, who probably were surprised at the cheerfulness they expressed in such circumstances. But they were surprised much more at the testimony the Lord immediately gave in behalf of his servants; for, while they were thus engaged, on a sudden the earth trembled; the very foundations of the prison were shaken, so that all the doors flew open, and every one's fetters and bonds were instantly loosed. The noise awakened the jailor, who, supposing the prisoners were all escaped, and dreading the consequences, in the first transports of his terror, drew his sword to slay himself; for so the false wisdom of the Heathens, ignorant of the awful realities beyond the grave, taught men to avoid the pressure of present troubles by desperately plunging themselves into an unknown eternity. But St. Paul, though in another part of the prison, and in the dark, was made acquainted with his purpose, and called out to him with a loud voice, "Do thyself no harm; we are all here." It increased his surprise to find that his design was made known to them, and that those whom he had treated so hardly should forget all their wrongs and interest themselves in his preservation. Such an instance of forgiveness and tenderness to an enemy, deeply affected him, and convinced him of the wrong he had done them, more forcibly than the sharpest expostulations could have done. This is indeed the peculiar triumph of a christian, to overcome evil with

good. He immediately called for a light, and, in an agony of guilt and terror, sprung in, and cast himself at the feet of those over whom he had so lately tyrannized. After this expression of his respect, and compunction for the injury he had done them, he brought them out, and addressed them with that question, of the last importance to every awakened soul, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Paul and Silas, who had but one answer to this question, suited to every rank of life, and to sinners of every degree, directed him to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the only and infallible means of salvation. This faith the Lord was pleased to give; so that, when he had brought them to his house, and heard them explain the doctrine more at large, he believed, and was baptized with all his family. Upon this his sorrow was turned into permanent joy, and now it appeared why the Lord had permitted his servants to be thus rudely handled. Amongst other reasons, it was on the account of this jailor, who would otherwise have remained a stranger to the gospel, if the Lord, in the unsearchable riches of his mercy, had not thus sent it to him, and, by the concurrent dispensations of his providence, disposed him to receive it with thankfulness, as life from the dead. It likewise proved the vanity of all attempts to suppress the truth. The magistrates and people abused the preachers, and put them in prison; but the effect was quite contrary to their intentions, for by this means the jailor, the instrument of their cruelty, with his household, were converted, and thus the apostle's enemies, through the over-ruling hand of God, became subservient to his design, and helped him to some of the first members of this new church.

The jailor, thus made partaker of the faith, expressed his gratitude to his prisoners: he washed their stripes, and set meat before them, and was soon freed from any suspense on their account; for, in the morning, the magistrates sent him orders to dismiss them from confinement. But St. Paul was willing to let them know that they had failed in their duty, and acted against those very laws and customs, of which, as Romans, they professed to be so tenacious. A citizen of Rome was not liable to bonds or scourging, and a subject of Rome, though not a citizen, could not be legally punished till he had been permitted to answer his accusers face to face, Acts xxv. 16. The apostle was injured in both these respects; they had punished him without trial, and they had bound and beat him, though he was a Roman: he therefore asserted his privilege. He might have insisted on satisfaction; but he was a christian, a willing disciple of a suffering Saviour: he had been once a persecutor himself, and had obtained forgiveness: therefore he found it easy to forgive. His remonstrance made the magistrates willing to submit to his terms; they came themselves, and honourably dismissed their prisoners, entreating them, that, to prevent farther inconveniencies, they would withdraw from the city; which they did, after they had taken leave of Lydia and the other disciples.

A. D. 52.] From hence, passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, the residence of the Roman governor. Here Paul, according to his usual custom, applying himself first to the Jews, discoursed and reasoned with them in their synagogues three successive Sabbaths, out of their own scriptures, opening* the true sense of the prophecies concerning the Messiah, and then showing their accomplishment in the person of Jesus. His labour was not wholly in vain; some of them believed, and became disciples; but the rest, and the greater part, discovered the indignation and enmity of their hearts against the truth. Under such leaders, the unthinking rabble are easily instigated to do mischief; so that they found no difficulty to raise a tumultuous mob, who assaulted the house of Jason, where Paul and Silas resided; but not finding them there, they forced away Jason, and some of the new believers, before the magistrates. The accusation was, that the preachers of the gospel, who, from the effect of their doctrine in disturbing the false peace† of sin, began to be sufficiently described, when spoken of as men who turned the world upside down, and threw all into confusion wherever they appeared, were come thither also; that Jason had received and countenanced them; and that their fundamental tenets were inconsistent with obedience to government, since they professed and inculcated subjection to one Jesus, whom they styled their King. By such misrepresentations, the enemies of the gospel-doctrine have often aimed to render it obnoxious to the civil powers. The rulers were alarmed at this accusation; but being unwilling to proceed to extremities, though obliged to

* Acts xvii. 3. Opening and alleging; first explaining the true sense of the passage, and then laying down plain and undeniable deductions from it, applicable to the case in hand. Thus much is implied in the Greek words διανοιγων και παρατιθεμενος. A proper model for preachers and writers in divinity. How many controversies would cease, how much time would be redeemed, how many offences would be avoided, if it was universally followed, if the scriptures were explained in their true sense and connection, and nothing advanced but what could be fairly deduced from such an explanation

† It is still thought a sufficient and unanswerable objection against the preaching of the gospel, to say, These opinions cause divisions and separations, and break the peace of families and communities. We may bring the point to a short issue: Did our Lord foretell this as one sure and perpetual consequence that would attend the prevalence of his gospel, or did he not? If he did not, what is the meaning of Matth. xii. 34—36? If he did, then by what name are we to call that manner of preaching, which has either no tendency, or no power, to disturb the false and dangerous peace of a wicked world?

take some notice of what seemed to affect the interest of Cæsar, they took sufficient security of Jason and the rest for their good behaviour, and dismissed them without farther trouble. In the mean time, Paul and Silas, against whom the violence had been chiefly intended, were sent safely away by the brethren to Berea, where, regardless of their past dangers and sufferings, they pursued their endeavours to recommend the gospel to the Jews; and, in this place, they met with a friendly reception. It is said the Bereans were more noble than those of Thessalonica; for to be open to conviction and information is the mark of a noble mind: they were of a more free and ingenuous temper, not slaves to the fear of man, or the power of prejudice: they heard with candour, and examined the scriptures themselves to find the truth. The gospel of Christ is suited to give the fullest satisfaction to inquirers of this spirit. Accordingly, many of them believed. But when the Jews of Thessalonica were informed of this, they followed Paul thither, with a view to repeat the part they had acted in their own city; but they came too late: Paul had already planted the gospel; and, leaving Silas and Timothy, who were less obnoxious, to remain a little longer with the brethren, he was conducted first towards the sea, to elude the attempts of his enemies, and afterwards to Athens, a city which, for its eminence in literature and all the polite arts, was styled, by general consent, the seat of the Muses.

While the apostle waited at Athens for the arrival of Silas and Timothy, his spirit was inflamed with a lively concern for the honour of God, and the welfare of souls: it grieved him to see a city, so famed for refinement and philosophy, wholly given to idolatry, and, with respect to the most important concerns of life, quite upon a level with the most ignorant barbarians. St. Paul is generally allowed, by those who will allow him little else, to have been a man of taste and letters. He was now at Athens, the school of philosophy, and centre of the fine arts: painting, statuary, architecture, and elegance appeared in every quarter: but the affecting observation he had made of the state of the inhabitants, so filled his mind, that he could take little notice of any thing else. To those who understand the nearness and importance of an eternal state, the highest improvements of unsanctified reason afford little more entertainment than the trivial sports of children, or the more wretched amusements of lunatics. He was so struck with the ignorance, superstition, and wickedness of the people, that he could relish none of the beauties of the place; but, full of a different emotion, compassionately laboured to inspire them with true wisdom. He was soon encountered by the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, the respectable advocates for those principles of pleasure and pride, to one or the other of which all men are enslaved till the gospel sets them free. Here, in some measnre accommodating himself to the prevailing taste, he reasoned with the reasoners, and silenced the wise men of the world, in their own way, by dint of argument; but the contest was unequal; their syllogisms soon failed them; and they were forced to retreat to their last refuge, an affected wit and raillery. Unable to answer the force of his discourses, they triumphed without a victory, and expressed their contempt of him and his doctrine by a word of the lowest and most despicable signification, which our version not improperly renders a babbler; but perhaps no term in our language can sufficiently express the poignancy of the original. Others so entirely mistook the state of the question, that they thought he was a publisher or setter forth of strange gods; they thought that Jesus and the Resurrection were deities they had not before heard of; and his discourse always turning upon these topics, they concluded, indeed with reason, that his only business and desire was to proclaim to all the divinity whom he worshipped. And it is no wonder that, from a half-attention to his words, they should be induced to personify the Resurrection as a deity, since the Heathens had altars erected, not only to Honour, Virtue, and Liberty, but to the vices and disorders of human nature, such as Fear, Shame, Famine, and Fevers.

This weak mistake gave occasion to summon him before the council, who bore the name of Areopagus, or the Hill of Mars, from the place where they met, an assembly in high estimation for authority and wisdom, and whose particular office it was to superintend the public religion, and preserve it from innovation. It does not appear, however, that he underwent a formal trial before them. His opponents seemed rather disposed to gratify their curiosity than their malice: their politeness, perhaps, made them something averse to the severer forms of prosecution, and content with the less invidious, though to many not less formidable methods, of scorn and ridicule. Their prevailing passion was the love of novelty; they spent their time in telling or hearing some new, or, as the Greek expresses it, some newer thing. The expected news lost its relish the moment it was known: and they were always in search for something newer still; therefore the gospel, though the strongest, as well as the most important news they had ever met with, could not engage such volatile minds: while it was the newer thing, the freshest news, they were content to listen: but as soon as they were satisfied what it was, they wanted to hear something else. The apostle no where met with so

little success as amongst this polite, learned, ignorant people; and wherever this Athenian spirit prevails, it retards the success of the gospel more than all the arts and violence of persecution.

The discourse of the apostle on this occasion is equally a standard of fine address and of just reasoning. He had observed their religious rites and worship with attention, and had selected from among their numerous altars the one which was most fit for his purpose. The beauty of his exordium is obscured by the expression, *too superstitious*, in our version: the Greek word to which it answers is ambiguous, and suited to bespeak a favourable hearing, rather than importing an abrupt reproof; *q. d.* "I perceive, indeed, Athenians, that you are observant of the invisible powers in an unusual manner; for, besides the variety of temples and altars which you have in common with other cities of Greece, I observed one with a peculiar inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. This God, as yet unknown to you, is he whom I serve; and the new doctrine, of which you ask me, relates to his will and worship." This was the most happy and pertinent medium to enlarge from that could be imagined. The Athenians, always eager to hear some newer thing, expected an account of new deities, but Paul referred them to an altar and inscription among themselves, which, merely by being obvious, had escaped their reflection. It is to be feared that this observation and inscription may suit the devotions of many who think themselves christians. The same address is visible in his whole argument. To the Jews he quoted the books of the holy scriptures; but with these Heathens he appealed to the volume of creation, and argued from the impresses of power, wisdom, and goodness everywhere displayed before their eyes, the excellence and independence of their great Author, how little he stood in need of men, and how unworthy of his divine majesty all their laborious inventions were, while they thought to honour him by worshipping the works of their own hands: he asserted the providence and omnipresence of God, that he was the fountain of life and all its comforts, the supreme disposer of all events, and the common Father of mankind, confirming this part of his doctrine by a quotation from Aratus, one of their own poets. He afterwards proceeded to the topics of revelation, a resurrection to future life, and a final judgment by the man Christ Jesus. It would require too much room to point out particularly the spirit, propriety, and evidence of this short sermon. But no oratory or reasoning can change the heart. The effect was the same, as may be observed amongst ourselves, when much inferior instruments declare the truths of God: some mocked, and accounted this wisdom the merest folly; others, pleased with his manner, and perhaps affected with some transient emotions of mind, expressed a willingness to hear him again; and a few, a very few, believed, among whom was Dionysius, one of the Areopagite judges.

Having so little encouragement to prolong his stay at Athens, the apostle proceeded to Corinth, at that time accounted the chief city of Greece. Here he unexpectedly found companions prepared for him (Acts xviii.) Aquila, a native of Pontus, by birth a Jew, with Priscilla, his wife, had received the faith of the gospel in Italy, from whence they had lately been constrained to remove by an edict of the emperor, enjoining all Jews to depart from Rome. Whether the christians were particularly aimed at by the name of Jews in this decree is uncertain: but as their Lord and Master had lived in Judea, and the first preachers and converts were generally of that nation, perhaps, likewise, because they asserted and proved their doctrines from those books for which the Jews professed the highest veneration, the christians were for some time considered as Jews by most of the Heathens. This happy pair, partners in faith and affection, were led by that Divine Providence which certainly, though secretly, guides the steps of his servants, to seek a retreat in Corinth, about the time St. Paul arrived there. They soon became acquainted, and, of course, intimate. He often mentions them in his writings, as having, upon many occasions, afforded him help and comfort; for, as in nature so in grace, none are so sufficient to themselves but they may be glad of assistance from others, even from such as are in many respects their inferiors. They abode and wrought together, being of the same business; for though St. Paul well understood his liberty, and that, as a preacher of the gospel, he had a right to expect a maintenance from those to whom he ministered, yet he condescended to work as a common handicraft, at the employment of making tents. One reason of his submitting to this, he informs us himself, was a prudent precaution to obviate any insinuations that might be raised or received against him of a design to make gain of godliness, or to abuse his influence to mercenary purposes. But his example may farther teach us that secular employments are not in themselves incompatible with a faithful and regular discharge of the gospel-ministry, when the circumstances of the times may so require. But his main and proper business, to which he always attended, in season and out of season,* was preaching the gospel of Christ.

* 2 Tim. iv. 2. Be instant in season and out of season; not unseasonably, as supposing a time in which it would be better to forbear, but in season, at set and stated times, and out of season, that is occasionally.

To this he addressed himself at Corinth, first (as usual) to the Jews, being pressed in spirit, borne on by a constraining sense of the love of Christ and the worth of souls, and probably more confirmed and warmed by the accounts brought him by Silas and Timothy, who rejoined him here from Macedonia. Animated, rather than discouraged, by the opposition he had formerly met with, he strenuously urged to the Jews, from their own scriptures, the proofs that Jesus was the Messiah, with such evidence as must have gained their assent, had they not been hardened and obstinate; but when they persisted in returning contradiction and despite to his repeated labours of love, he at length gave them up, and told them, that having discharged his duty and his conscience, their blood would be upon their own heads; that their guilt was most aggravated, and their destruction approaching: and that, for the future, he would frequent their synagogues no more, but address himself to the Gentiles. He accordingly preached in the house of one Justus, near the synagogue, and though most of the Jews were hardened beyond the reach of conviction, yet the Lord had a small remnant amongst them here likewise. Crispus, a chief ruler, or president of the synagogue, believed with all his house; and of the Heathens, many were converted and baptized.

If Corinth was less celebrated than Athens for philosophy and science, it was more so for riches and luxury, which are no less powerful hinderances to the reception of the truth. This consideration, joined to the violent spirit of his opposers, might perhaps have prompted him to a speedy departure; but the Lord, whom he served, appeared to him in a vision, and bid him not be afraid or discouraged, but continue to preach, assuring him his labour should not be in vain; for, though present appearances might promise but little success, [A. D. 53] he had many people known to himself in that proud, sensual, idolatrous city. It signifies but little what enemies or difficulties a faithful minister may be threatened with, if the Lord has many people in that place; he who sent him to call them out of darkness into his marvellous light, will support and defend him, so that either none shall rise against him, or at least none be able to prevail to his real harm. That the people, whom the Lord here spoke of as his own, were no better, either by nature or practice, than others, is plain from what the apostle reminds them of after their conversion, 1 Cor. vi. 9—11. We learn from the same epistle (chap. ii. 3,) that his conflicts and exercises at this time were very great. Supported, however, by such a seasonable and gracious encouragement, he remained there a year and a half; and all the efforts of his enemies were insufficient either to damp his zeal and activity, or to prevent the success of his labours, though the Lord permitted them to try what they could do, and thereby more clearly showed that the safety of his servants depends on himself.

When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia (who, as it seems by Luke's expression, entered upon his government during the apostle's abode at Corinth,) the Jews appeared tumultuously before the tribunal, with the old accusation, that he subverted the laws of Moses. Gallio prevented Paul's intended defence, and refused to interfere in points foreign to the Roman laws: he said, that if their charge had been laid for any trespass or immorality, he would readily have taken cognizance of the affair, but should leave them to settle their religious disputes between themselves. With this reprimand he dismissed, or rather drove them from his presence. The conduct of Gallio, in this affair has been considered in different lights, and praised or censured accordingly. History gives him a fair character for equity and moderation; and it must be allowed he judged right, in refusing to interpose the civil authority to give sanction to persecution: yet he seems, upon this occasion, to have discovered that political indifference which has prompted so many great and wise men, in the world's estimation, to treat the gospel as a trivial scheme unworthy their notice. He rather showed contempt than impartiality: he would not hear either party, because he despised both, and therefore drove them away with scorn. In fine, the Jews not only failed in their design, but were themselves assaulted by some of the inhabitants, who beat Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, even in the open court, and Gallio, though he saw it, cared for none of these things; which is a further proof that he was influenced by some other motives than impartiality and a regard to justice, or he would not have suffered his authority to be insulted, and a person (upon his own principles innocent) abused before his face. I suppose (though it is a controverted point) that the Sosthenes here mentioned was at that time an enemy to Paul, and joined in the prosecution attempted against him. Perhaps he was afterwards converted, and accompanied the apostle in his travels, as this name is prefixed with

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Improve every opportunity that offers, not on the Lord's day only, but on any other; not only in a solemn and full discourse, but let the glory of God, and the good of souls, be your scope in every conversation. It answers to the account the apostle gives of his own conduct. He preached publicly, and from house to house, by night and by day, Acts xx. 20. 31. As a physician, besides his ordinary round of practice, is ready to afford his help upon every sudden application, this should be the aim of a gospel-minister: he should be constant to all his stated appointments, and willing to make the most of every unexpected call to service.

his own, to his first epistle to the Corinthians.

NERO, A. D. 54.] St. Paul, after about two years stay in Greece, from his first landing at Macedonia, embarked at Cenchrea, the port of Corinth, intending for Syria. In this voyage they touched at Ephesus, the chief city of the Proper or Proconsular Asia. Here, as in other places, he entered into the Jews' synagogues, desirous, if possible, to lead them to the knowledge of the Messiah. At this city he left his dear companions Aquila and Priscilla, who would willingly have detained him longer; but St. Paul having formed the plan of his progress in such a manner as he judged most suitable to his main design, readily sacrificed the dictates of affection to the calls of duty, and persisted in his purpose to be at Jerusalem on the approaching passover: he took leave of them therefore, with a promise of returning at a proper time, and proceeding on his voyage, landed at Cæsarea, from whence he went to Jerusalem. His stay here was not long: having answered the design of his journey, and conversed with the brethren, he revisited the places where he had formerly preached, and went first to Antioch, and from thence through the provinces of Galatia and Phrygia. In this circuit he lost no time, but published the glad tidings of salvation, and confirmed the hearts of the disciples wherever he came.

While he was on this service, there came to Ephesus a Jew of Alexander, named Apollos: he had been as yet only instructed in the rudiments of the faith, so far as was communicated by the teaching and baptism of John; but though his knowledge was not extensive, his zeal was lively and fervent, and having a prompt elocution, and great readiness in the scriptures, he preached concerning Christ with much freedom and earnestness, according to the measure of light he had received. Aquila and Priscilla were amongst his hearers; and having more experience and knowledge than himself, they easily perceived wherein he was deficient, and, with candour and tenderness, instructed him farther. This passage is worthy the notice both of preachers and hearers. What Apollos had learned, he willingly communicated; what he was yet ignorant of, he as willingly received when proposed to him; his zeal and humility went hand in hand. This is an amiable and thriving character. The man who is faithful to present light, and open to farther conviction, will soon be wise and successful; the Lord will provide him both teachers and hearers; he shall profit others, and be profited himself every day. The prudence and moderation of Aquila and Priscilla are no less commendable; they did not acquiesce in all he said, because he was eloquent and mighty in the scriptures; neither did they reject and disdain him because they knew more than he, much less expose and revile him as a low ignorant preacher, but they spoke to him in private: they approved what was right, and showed him mildly and faithfully wherein he was defective; they commended his zeal, and improved his knowledge. With these advantages, and letters of recommendation to the brethren, he went from thence to Corinth, where he was highly serviceable to the church, publicly maintaining and proving against the Jews, with great earnestness of spirit and strength of argument, that Jesus was the Messiah.

Not long after his departure (Acts xix,) Paul having completed his progress through the upper or interior parts of Asia Minor, returned, according to his promise, to Ephesus. Here he found some more disciples, who, like Apollos, though acquainted with the doctrine and baptism of John, were hitherto strangers to those peculiar gifts, graces, and comforts, which, as the fruits of the Holy Spirit, were bestowed on the believers in Jesus; but by the imposition of the apostle's hands, they were immediately made partakers of the same benefits.

A. D. 55.] The apostle, unwilling to give up his own people, the Jews, continued his labours of love among them for three months, if, by any means, he might bring them to the acknowledgment of the truth; but at length perceiving, that, instead of yielding, they hardened themselves still more, and obstinately laboured to traduce and defame the author and way of salvation before the people, he finally desisted, and selecting those who had received the gospel from the many who might hinder and confuse them, he formed them into a society among themselves. He continued daily to preach and defend the gospel, for two years afterwards, in a public school, with indefatigable zeal and diligence, seconding his more stated services with occasional and pressing exhortations from house to house, and watering the seed with many prayers and tears. His labours were not in vain; he had great success, not only in the city of Ephesus, but amongst many, who, resorting thither from other parts, and with different views, were providentially led to hear him, and being divinely convinced themselves, carried home the joyful tidings with them: so that the knowledge of the gospel was generally spread throughout the province. The attention of the people was still farther excited, and their prejudices softened, by the numerous displays and visible tendency of that divine power by which the Lord confirmed the words of his servant. Many striking miracles, emblematical of the healing efficacy of gospel-grace, were wrought by the most inconsiderable means; so that persons af-

flicted with various maladies, or possessed by evil spirits, were perfectly restored to health, by the application of handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his body.

Among the various methods by which the gospel has been opposed, one is by a feeble imitation and a pretended acknowledgment of some of its principles, while the heart is unacquainted or unaffected with the design and scope of the whole doctrine. Enmity, or, at best, interest, is often the spring of many attempts that are veiled under a fair profession of good words; but such attempts will always issue in the disappointment or confusion of those who venture on them. An instance of this kind happened at Ephesus: some vagrant Jews, who made claim to a power of exorcising or dispossessing evil spirits, struck with the miracles wrought in the name of Jesus, presumed to adopt this sacred name into the number of their professed mysteries; and meeting with a fit subject for the exercise of their art, they undertook to adjure the evil spirit to depart from a man, by the name of Jesus whom Paul preached. But the man under the influence of the evil spirit, insulted and exposed them; he acknowledged the authority of Jesus, and the fidelity of Paul; but, demanding farther, who they were that durst make free with these names? far from obeying their summons, he fiercely assaulted them, and forced them, though seven in number, to flee for their lives, naked, wounded, and terrified. Great indeed is the power of the name of Jesus; but when not pronounced by faith, it is spoken in vain: Satan laughs at such vain pretenders, and prevails against them. So, when those who are destitute of faith, undertake to write or preach concerning Jesus, it will seldom prove to more purpose than if they attempted to exorcise the people; instead of delivering others from the power of Satan, they are more and more subjected to him themselves; and, unless the grace of God interposes to teach them better, their latter end is usually worse than their beginning.

This public defeat of the enemy added to the triumph of the gospel and the honour of the apostle, and produced a reverence and awe in the hearts of many, convincing them of the power of evil spirits when not restrained, and the danger of trifling with the name or ministry of Christ; and many who had been addicted to the magic arts (for which Ephesus was peculiarly infamous) renounced their delusions, confessed their folly and wickedness to the apostle, made a public profession of the gospel, and, in proof that their faith and repentance were sincere, brought the books containing the secrets and principles of their pretended skill, and publicly committed them to the flames. These were either so numerous or so dear, that the value was computed at fifty thousand pieces of silver. What this sum might be in our money, the learned are not agreed; the lowest calculations fix it at about fifteen hundred pounds, while some compute it at more than seven thousand. We are not, however, sure they were all on the subject of magic; a variety of other disquisitions might possibly contribute to enlarge the pile. Curious books and curious arts had been multiplied; but the one book of truth now made the rest useless and tasteless; they had now found the pearl of great price, and willingly parted with their once admired pebbles: and we may believe, that if the worth and power of the holy scriptures were once generally known, many curious libraries in our days, if they escaped unburnt, would at least remain unread and unnoticed. When the wise thus renounced their wisdom, and the artful their gain, burnt their books with their own hands, and devoted themselves to the study of the scriptures alone, it is once more observed, so mightily grew the word of God and prevailed!

A. D. 57.] The apostle, of whom it may be said with more propriety than of Cæsar, that he accounted nothing done while any thing remained to do, in the midst of his important engagements at Ephesus, was still meditating new services; he retained a warm affection and care for his friends in different, distant, and opposite quarters; he had thoughts of revisiting Macedonia and Greece, and, from thence, once more to go to Jerusalem; and, not content with reviewing his past labours, he longed to preach in places he had not yet seen,—saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome: nor was Rome the boundary of his views; for from thence he proposed to proceed to Spain, Rom. xv. 24. We are taught from our infancy to admire those, who, in the language of the world, are styled great captains and conquerors, because they burned with a desire to carry slaughter and terror into every part of the globe, and to aggrandize their names by the depopulation of countries, and the destruction of their species, while this generous spirit of St. Paul is almost totally overlooked: unwearied by difficulties, undismayed by dangers, unsatisfied with the greatest success, unaffected with the justest applause, he seemed to lay his benevolent schemes wide as the human race: he reaped no profit, he sought no praise; he rejected the allurements of pleasure, to which the greatest conquerors have often been irresolute slaves; he endured the reproach and contempt of the people, which no hero, but the true christian, was ever strong enough to bear with patience; and all this only to make others partakers of the happiness which he enjoyed himself. However, finding it necessary to continue some time longer where he was, he despatched

his beloved Timothy to Macedonia, to apprize his friends of his intention, and to prepare them for his visit, when a proper opportunity should permit.

In the mean time (Acts xix. 23,) an incident fell out which well illustrates the causes and genius of that opposition and outcry which is usually made when the power of gospel-truth interferes with the passions and interests of designing men. St. Paul's great success and the additions daily made to the church of Christ, had a visible tendency to lessen the estimation and gain of those whose chief resource was in the ignorance and wickedness of the people. These were not backward to take the alarm, and had been waiting an opportunity, to show their resentment. The Lord, who holds all hearts in his own hands, had restrained them hitherto, that his work of grace might not be disturbed; but when the apostle was upon the point of departure, this restraint was in some measure taken off. The temple of Diana, at Ephesus, was celebrated for its magnificence far and near; so that many shrines or models of it were made for sale, and in much demand. This branch of business brought in considerable gain to the silversmiths, and other mechanics; but if the gospel of Christ continued to spread, it was highly probable that these, with many other such toys, would be little inquired after. Demetrius, a leading man amongst them, convening his brethren and dependants, and as many as he could, whose interest seemed more immediately affected by this novel doctrine, harangued them with much address and influence on a point in which they had so near and mutual a concern; he reminded them, with a seasonable frankness, that their gain was at stake:* this was the main argument; yet, as one not wholly governed by mercenary views, he expressed a very tender concern for the honour of Diana, lest her worship, and their advantage, should cease together, as they certainly would, if this Paul should be peaceably suffered to persuade the people, that they can be no gods which are made with hands. An appeal to the two prevailing passions of mankind, interest and superstition, is seldom made in vain. The arguments of Demetrius have been employed a thousand times over against the gospel, though all opposers have not had his honesty in avowing their leading motive. The doctrine which discountenances folly and wickedness, will certainly be defamed and resisted by all who find their account in promoting them; but as this motive is rather invidious, if insisted on alone, they express likewise an earnest zeal for whatever tenets have the sanction of authority, antiquity, or custom, with which their private interest is inseparably connected. He had said enough to inflame his hearers; and these were sufficiently numerous to stimulate the unthinking rabble, who, though quiet till they are headed by artful leaders, are easily roused to rage and tumult when thus influenced, as the sea that has been long calm obeys the impulse of the rising gale. The outcry began by Demetrius, and his companions; Great is Diana of the Ephesians, was soon resounded through the city; and the multitude, being informed that their established religion, their stately temple, and costly rites, were all in danger, rushed from all parts tumultuously into the public theatre, dragging two of St. Paul's dear companions, Gaius and Aristarchus, along with them, perhaps with a design to throw them to the wild beasts, which were kept for the barbarous diversion of the people at their public games. The apostle, warmly concerned for his friends' safety, and confiding in the goodness of his cause, and the providence of his God, was not intimidated by this violent uproar, but purposed to face the enraged mob; but the earnest solicitations of the disciples, who could not but be anxious for the event, restrained him: and even some who had not received his doctrine, from a regard to what they knew of his character and conduct, employed their endeavours to preserve him. These, in the text, are styled Asiarchs, persons of note who presided in the regulation of the games. Some of them sent to inform him, that in the present confusion, it was not in their power to protect him from violence, and therefore desired he would keep in safety. Though his resolution was not shaken, yet judging this might be a providential intimation, that it was not his duty at that time to expose himself, he desisted. The mob, thus disappointed with respect to him, and secretly restrained from hurting the others, continued in the utmost confusion, though few knew why they were assembled, unless it was to join in the cry, Great is Diana of the Ephesians, which they repeated without intermission for two hours. When they had thus exhausted themselves, and their passions, through weariness, began to subside, a public officer of the city seized the favourable moment to expostulate with them concerning their behaviour; he spoke with freedom and address, but with that indifference which the wise men of the world so frequently discover in religious concerns. Many deserve commendation for their readiness to allow others the peaceable possession of their own sentiments, who, at the same time, deserve our pity, that they have no inclination or leisure to inquire for themselves. He allowed, in

* This is the main objection against the gospel, though pretexts are industriously sought to hide it; it alarms those who thrive by the ignorance or wickedness of the times; gain is the motive, the honour of Diana the plea But it may be easily proved, that such occupations as are endangered by the success of the gospel, are in themselves injurious to the peace and good order of civil society.

general terms, the honours of Diana, and pleaded, in behalf of the men, that they had not spoken against Diana in particular, or intermeddled with her temple,* Acts xix. 37. This was probably true in fact: St. Paul declared the folly of idolatry in general, but did not enter into direct confutation of any detached part of the Heathen mythology: he proposed the plain truth of the gospel; and when this was received, the whole system of idol-worship fell to the ground of itself. He farther reminded them, that if they had any just cause of complaint, they ought to seek redress in a course of law;† and then hinting at the consequences they were liable to, if called to a strict account‡ for their riot, he prevailed on them to separate and depart quietly. Thus the apostle, though threatened with a most imminent and formidable danger, was preserved unhurt, and suffered neither in his person nor character. An encouraging proof that those who act in the path of duty, and depend on the power of God, are equally safe in all times and circumstances; no less safe when surrounded by enraged enemies, than when encircled by kind and assiduous friends.

He did not continue long at Ephesus after this tumult; but taking leave of the disciples, went to Troas, and from thence (as he had purposed) to Macedonia, Acts xx. We have but little account of this progress in the history of the Acts; but from some passages of his epistles (2 Cor. ii. 12, 13, and vii. 5,) written about that time, we are informed, that his exercises and trials, both inward and outward, were very great. His solicitous affection for the churches was far from being the smallest source of his troubles, and cost him many a pang.§ He loved them in the bowels of Jesus Christ; he could willingly have devoted his labours and life to each of them, but he could not be with them all; and knowing the weakness of the heart, the subtlety of Satan, and the obvious temptations arising from the fear of man, the love of the world, and the arts of false teachers, he was jealous over those from whom he was absent with a godly jealousy, 2 Cor. xi. 2. At Troas he expected to have met with Titus, on his return from Macedonia; but missing him, though he had favourable opportunities of preaching the gospel at Troas (2 Cor. ii. 12, 13,) his mind was not at liberty to improve them; but he hasted to be in Macedonia, that he might the sooner be satisfied. There, he tells us himself, he had no rest, but was troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears; but he speaks of it as a seasonable and gracious interposition of that God, whose character and prerogative it is to be a comforter of those that are cast down (2 Cor. vii. 6,) that, in these circumstances, he was comforted by the coming of Titus, who relieved his fears by the favourable account he brought him from Corinth.

A. D. 58.] How long he staid in these parts we are not told; but, in general, that he spent some time, and visited many places; and it seems to have been in this circuit that he preached in Illyricum, a part of which country borders upon Macedonia. He afterwards proceeded to Greece, where he staid three months; he intended to have embarked from thence at some port, and to have proceeded immediately to Syria by sea; but, upon information that his restless enemies, the Jews, were plotting to intercept and kill him, he determined to return through Macedonia. Several of his friends offered to accompany him through Asia, who, embarking before him, waited for him at Troas, where he, at a convenient time, joined them from Philippi, and remained there seven days.

On the first day of the week, they had a solemn assembly; and St. Paul, who was to take a long and last farewell of the disciples there the next morning, indulged his own and their affections, by protracting his discourses and advices beyond the usual bounds; he spent the whole day, even till midnight, in expatiating upon the pleasing topics of redeeming love. This does not, indeed, appear to have been his usual practice; but should a company of believers now spend a night together in the exercises they best love, though it were but once, and when they had no expectation of meeting again till they should meet in glory, it would be sufficient to open the mouths of prejudice and slander amongst them, as regardless of the order of families, and the duties of common life. Particular notice is taken, that they had many lights in the upper chamber, where they were met, perhaps to remind us, that the first christians were careful to conduct their assemblies with order and propriety, so as to give no just cause of offence; yet their enemies quickly

* The words *robbers of churches*, should rather be rendered *robbers of temples;* for though the word *church* is now expressive of some particular places of worship, it is never in the New Testament applied to buildings, but to persons only.

† The servants of Christ will seldom be compelled to answer for themselves in a course of law, except in those places where sanguinary laws are contrived purposely against them. In default of these, their adversaries will often stoop to appeal from the magistrate to the mob.

‡ It seems, however, there was no more said of it. It had been a notorious breach of the peace, but then it had been against St. Paul and his companions, who had sufficient favour shown them if they came off with their lives. In any other case, such a tumult would have been deemed a high offence.

§ 2 Cor. xi. 28. "That which cometh on me daily." The word is επισυστασις,—and gives the idea of a camp or castle hard beset with continual onsets and assaults: or of a man who has his way to force through a great crowd that are coming to meet him; so that he must not only be much encumbered and hindered, but unless he exerts himself to the utmost, is in danger of being trampled under their feet. By this lively figure, the apostle describes the part he took in the welfare of all the churches. His cares on their behalf were so numerous, urgent, and continual, that they found full employment for his prayers, his thoughts, and his time.

began to charge them with meeting in the dark, and invented many false and wicked slanders upon that supposition. The like falsehoods have been often repeated. A young man of the company, either less attentive, or less warmly engaged than the rest, dropped asleep, and not only lost much of an invaluable opportunity, but fell out of a window, in which he was seated, from the third story, and was taken up to appearance dead; an incident which might have given those who hated the apostle a farther occasion to clamour, and to revile his unseasonable zeal; but he went down in the spirit of faith and prayer, and embracing the young man, restored him to his friends alive. After they were recovered from the hurry of this event, and had taken some refreshment, he resumed his discourse, and continued in conference with them till the break of day,* when he bade them farewell.

His companions went along the coast by shipping at Assos, a place not very distant, and to which the apostle chose to go by land, and on foot. Some think he did this by way of self-denial; but it is not likely that he, who was the great asserter of evangelical and filial liberty, would lay any stress upon such singularities. Self may readily submit to many things of this sort, and derive food, complacence, and strength from them. It is more probable he chose to walk, either that he might embrace occasions of service by the way, or for the advantage of leisure and retirement; for christians engaged in a very public sphere of life (as he was) are glad to redeem opportunities of being alone, at the price of some inconveniences. But this circumstance is mentioned as characterising the simplicity of his spirit; though greatly honoured, and greatly beloved, he thought it not beneath him to walk from place to place, like an obscure person.

Embarking at Assos, and having touched at Mitylene and Samos, intermediate places, they arrived in a few days at Miletus. St. Paul purposely passed Ephesus, that he might not be detained or grieved by the many dear friends he had in that city; for he was resolved, if possible, to be at Jerusalem on the approaching day of Pentecost; but from Miletus he sent for the elders or bishops of the church of Ephesus, to receive his final charge and benediction. When they came, he addressed them in a solemn and affectionate discourse. The substance of it, which is recorded for our instruction, if considered only as a piece of oratory, has been often admired and celebrated by critics; but there are strokes in it, the force and beauty of which no critic can truly relish, except he has tasted of the same spirit which filled and animated the apostle's heart when he spoke it.

He began with an appeal to themselves concerning his conduct while resident among them, and reminded them of the diligence, fidelity, and tenderness which he had manifested in the course of his ministry, how he had seconded his public instructions with private and repeated exhortations, watering them both with many prayers and tears; he informed them of the object and service of his present journey, and how uncertain he was what the issue might prove to himself. But though he had general intimations from the Spirit of God, to expect afflictions and bonds in every place, his determination was fixed; he had counted the cost, and saw that nothing he could meet with was worth his serious thought, so that he might be able to fulfil his ministry with honour, and to finish his course with joy;† but this he said, he was assured of, that the pleasing opportunities he had enjoyed with the believers at Ephesus, and in that neighbourhood, were ended; and that they now saw and heard him for the last time. Only those who know the endeared affection that subsists between a minister of Christ and those to whom God has made him the instrument of saving their souls, can judge of the emotion with which he spoke, and his friends heard, this part of his discourse. When he had thus touched and engaged their tenderest passions, and prepared them to receive his parting solemn charge with a due attention, he exhorted them, in the most animated terms, to follow his example, in performing the part of faithful overseers, or bishops, in the church which he now committed to their care; suggesting two most powerful motives, the consideration that they were appointed to this office by the Holy Ghost, and that the souls entrusted to them were the church of God, which he had purchased with his own blood. He likewise warned them, that the utmost circumspection would be needful; for that he foresaw, that, after his departure, grievous wolves would enter amongst them, not sparing the flock; and also, that out of their own number of professed disciples, men should arise, speaking perverse things. This double danger of false teachers from without, and a restless curious spirit within the fold,

* This, as we have observed, was upon a particular occasion; they expected to see each other no more, and hardly knew how to part. The like circumstances might justify such protracted meetings of christian friends still; but, in general, they are to be avoided. If frequently indulged, they would break in upon other things, indispose those who attend for the ordinary duties of their stations, be prejudicial to health, and, for these and other reasons, prove a cause of offence.

† The state of obedience and service which we owe to him who died for us, and rose again, is often compared to a race or course; by which is intimated, the assiduity with which we ought to pursue our calling, the brevity of our labours and sufferings, the little attention we should pay to objects around us, and that our eye and aim should be constantly directed to the prize set before us. Every step in this race is attended with trouble: but the end will be unspeakable joy. Those to whom the King shall say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," will not then complain of the difficulties they met by the way.

all societies of christians are exposed to; and it is a strong call to ministers in all ages, to be mindful of the apostle's charge, and to take heed to the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made them overseers. He again put them in remembrance of his own conduct, his assiduity and disinterestedness; that he had not sought his own advantage, but had rather wrought with his own hands, that he might not be chargeable to them: finally, commending them to God, and the word of his grace, he closed his discourse, with proposing to their consideration an aphorism of our Lord Jesus, and illustrated by the whole tenor of his life, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." This sentiment, so highly expressive of the spirit of the divine author, which had been hitherto preserved in the hearts and mouths of his disciples, was upon this occasion inserted into the written word, and is the only authentic tradition concerning him which has been transmitted to the church. Having finished his pathetic address, he kneeled down, and prayed with them. The final farewell was very affecting; for how could those who owed him their souls, who had been so often comforted and edified by his instructions and example, consider that they were to see him no more in this world, without being greatly moved. They accompanied him to the ship, and then returned. The word which Luke, the historian, makes use of upon this occasion, intimates that the concern was mutual: it signifies to draw asunder by force, to separate things closely joined together: "When we had gotten from them," or, as it might be rendered, "When we had torn ourselves from them," well expresses the close union of their affections, and the sorrow and reluctance which both sides felt at parting.

When this struggle was over, St. Paul and his company put to sea with a favourable gale (Acts xxi;) and, having touched at Coos and Rhodes, two islands of note in the Ægean sea, continued their course to Patara in Lycia, where they seasonably met with a ship upon the point of departure for Phœnicia; and embarking in her, they passed on the south side of Cyprus, and had a safe voyage to Tyre, where, that being the destined port of the vessel, they landed. As he was not now very far distant from Jerusalem, and had finished that part of his voyage in which he was most exposed to unavoidable delays by the occurrences of winds and weather, so that he had a fair probability of reaching Jerusalem within his prescribed time, he consented to stay seven days with some disciples* he found there, Acts xxi. 4. From some of these he received an intimation, by a prophetic impulse, of the dangers he would be exposed to if he went to Jerusalem; but he knew whom he had believed, and, being convinced that his duty called him to persevere, he was not intimidated by a prospect of suffering. At the appointed time he embarked again, the disciples, with their families, accompanying him to the water side, where he took leave of them in an affectionate prayer upon the sea-shore.† He landed next at Ptolemais, a city of Palestine, and staid one day with the brethren there. The next day he proceeded to Cæsarea, and lodged at the house of Philip, the deacon, who had four daughters endued with the spirit of prophecy.

During his stay at Cæsarea, a prophet, named Agabus, came down from Jerusalem; and, agreeable to the manner of the ancient prophets, who frequently enforced their declarations by expressive signs and actions, he bound his own hands and feet with the apostle's girdle, assuring them in the name of the Holy Spirit, that in the same manner the Jews would bind the hands and feet of the man to whom that girdle belonged, and deliver him up as a criminal to the Roman power. Upon these repeated premonitions of what he was to expect, not only the disciples of Cæsarea, but those who had come with him, earnestly entreated him to desist from his purpose. We may learn from this passage that the clearest intelligence of approaching danger is not always a sufficient warrant to decline it, even when, in the judgment of our brethren, we might decline it without sin. St. Paul was satisfied that, all circumstances considered, it was right for him to proceed: he had taken his determination upon good grounds, was brought so far on his way in safety; and to be told (though from an infallible authority) that his views of service could not be completed without great risk and trouble to himself, did not discourage him in the least. He was less affected by the prospect of sufferings from the Jews than by the solicitations of his friends, and told them, that though they could not shake his resolution, their concern and importunity exceedingly distressed him. "What mean you to weep, and to break my heart! I am ready, not to be bound only, but also to die for the sake of the Lord Jesus." In this short speech we may discern a spirit which is indeed the honour of human nature. Inflexibly firm to his character and duty, yet expressing the most tender feelings for his friends, while he contemplated the severest trials that might affect himself unmoved, he was almost over-

* Ανευροντες τους μαθητας might be rendered, *finding out the disciples*. There seems no reason for suppressing the article, and the verb is used for finding out, in consequence of some description or inquiry, Luke ii. 16. We readily suppose, from the apostle's character, that his first inquiry, upon coming to any place where the gospel had been preached, related to those who loved the Lord Jesus, and how they were to be met with.

† Could many persons now living have seen this, without doubt they would have said, they had seen a strange company of enthusiasts and fanatics.

powered by what he felt for others. But when they saw that he was not to be dissuaded, they desisted from their suit, and acquiesced in the will of the Lord.

A. D. 60.] Having staid some time at Cæsarea, he proceeded to Jerusalem, his friends, who had crossed the sea with him, resolving to expose themselves to a share of the dangers from which they could not divert him. They were accompanied likewise by an old disciple, named Mnason, of Cyprus, who resided at Jerusalem, and had offered his house for their accommodation. Their arrival was welcome to the brethren; and the next day St. Paul introduced his friends to St. James and the elders, who seem to have met together on purpose to receive him. To them he gave a succinct account of the success with which God had honoured his ministry among the Gentiles; which, when they had heard, they unanimously glorified God on his behalf, and rejoiced to hear of the accession of such numbers to the christian faith, Acts xxi. But at the same time they gave him to understand that the bulk of the Jewish converts had received no small prejudice against him; that there were even many thousands who had heard and believed hard things of him, as one who taught the Jews to apostatize from the law of Moses, and forbade them to practise circumcision, and the other rites and customs of their forefathers. In order to show them that this charge was groundless, they advised him to join himself publicly with four men who were under a vow, and to attend with them the prescribed course of purification in the temple.

From this passage we are led to remark, that, through the weakness of human nature, the prejudices of education, and the arts of Satan, many thousands of professed christians, in the first and purest period of the primitive church, while under the care of the apostles, had imbibed from hear-say, a degree of coldness and dislike towards one of the Lord's most faithful and most favoured servants. How far the methods St. Paul was advised to pursue, for the removal of this misapprehension, was suited to his character and known integrity, is a question not easily determined. The apostles, considered in one light, as the penmen of a large part of the sacred canon of faith and practice, which the Lord was pleased by them to communicate to his church, were, doubtless, so far under the full direction and inspiration of his Holy Spirit; but we have no reason to believe, that in every part of their own personal conduct they were strictly infallible; nay, we have good warrant to conclude the contrary, as St. Paul himself assures us, that, upon a certain occasion, already mentioned, he withstood Peter to his face, because he was to be blamed. It is therefore no way derogatory from the character and authority of St. Paul, to inquire, whether, upon this occasion, the tenderness of his spirit towards weak believers, and his desire of becoming all things to all men, when the foundation-truths of the gospel were not affected, might not carry him too far: for though a reserve was made by James, in favour of the Gentile converts, that they should not be burdened with the observance of Jewish rites; yet the express end and design for which this step was proposed to him, and for which he seems to have undertaken it, was that all might know or believe, not only that he was not against others adhering to the Jewish ceremonies, but that he likewise orderly and statedly practised them himself. A circumstance which is far from being clear, or indeed probable, if we consider the strain of his epistle to the Galatians: which, though the addition at the close of our copies, mentions as sent from Rome, is generally allowed to have been written during his stay at Ephesus at the latest, if not sooner; and further, that, for some time past, his converse had been almost wholly confined to the Gentile believers, or to those churches of which they formed the largest part. If he became as a Jew amongst the Jews, it was, as he says himself (1 Cor. ix. 20,) only with the hope of gaining the Jews: which motive could no longer take place when he had finally withdrawn from their synagogues. Those, therefore, who suppose that, in this instance, he was overpersuaded to deviate from that openness of conduct which he generally maintained, seem to have some ground for their suspicion. This, however, is certain, his temporising did not answer the proposed end; but, instead of rendering him more acceptable, involved him in the greatest danger: for when the seven days were almost fulfilled, some Jews of Asia, seeing him in the temple, pointed him out to the multitude as the dangerous man who had apostatized from his religion, and was using his endeavours, wherever he went, to draw people from the worship of God according to the law of Moses. To this they added, that he had profaned the holy place, by bringing Gentiles with him into the temple. This they conjectured from having seen Trophymus, an Ephesian, with him in the city. This part of the charge was wholly false: he had not brought his Gentile friends into the temple; but he appeared so publicly with them upon other occasions, as to give some room for a surmise of this sort. If he submitted to the proposal of the elders, and attended in the temple himself, for the satisfaction of the Jewish converts, he would not go so far as to be ashamed of his friends, to make himself more acceptable to his enemies. It is our duty to avoid giving just offence; but if we boldly and honestly avow the Lord's people upon all proper occasions, without regard to

names and parties, we must expect to suffer from the zealots of all sides.

Those who first laid hands on him were soon assisted by great numbers; for the whole city was moved, and the people ran together from all quarters. They dragged him out of the temple, and were upon the point of killing him, without giving him time or leave to speak a word for himself: they thought him absolutely in their power; but they were prevented by the appearance of Lysias, a Roman officer, who had a post near the temple to prevent or suppress insurrections. Upon the first notice he received of this disturbance, he came down with a party of soldiers. The evangelist observes, that when the Jews ran to kill Paul, the Romans ran to save him. Thus the succour the Lord provides for his people is always proportioned to the case, and effectual to the end. When danger is pressing, relief is speedy. Lysias, though ignorant of the cause of this tumult, judging, by its violence, that the apostle must have been some great malefactor, commanded him to be bound with two chains; and when he could obtain no satisfactory information from the people, had him removed to the castle, or Roman station. But such was the violence of the incensed unmeaning multitude, that the soldiers were constrained to carry him in their arms up the steps, or stairs, which led thither from the temple. Here Paul obtained leave to speak for himself, the tribune inclining rather to a more favourable opinion of him, when he found he could speak Greek; and the people attended with some composure, when they heard him address them in the Hebrew, or Syriac language.

In his discourse (Acts xxii) he told them, that he had been brought up amongst themselves, and appealing to the high-priest and elders concerning the zeal and earnestness with which he had formerly served their party, he related the extraordinary dispensation by which the Lord Jesus had conquered his heart. This was St. Paul's usual method of defence, and though no means are sufficient to reach the heart without a divine influence, yet humanly speaking, a simple and faithful declaration of what God has done for our souls, seems most likely to convince, or at least to soften and silence, those who oppose. Enraged as the Jews had been, they listened with patience to his relation, till he proceeded to intimate the Lord's designs in favour of the Gentiles, and that he was appointed an apostle to them. Accustomed to despise the rest of mankind, and to deem themselves the only people of God, they could not bear this; they interrupted him instantly, and, with one voice, declared it was not fit such a fellow should live upon the earth: they cast off their clothes, threw dust in the air, and their fury seemed to deprive them of their reason. Lysias, the tribune, secured him from their violence, but commanded him to be examined by scourging, that he might know his crime from his own mouth, according to a barbarous custom of putting those to torture against whom there was no sufficient evidence, that their own extorted confession might furnish some grounds of proceeding against them: a custom still prevalent in most countries called christian, though contrary to religion, to reason, and to the common sentiments of humanity. Our Lord Jesus was examined in this manner before Pilate; and though the apostle was ready to follow the steps of his master in suffering, yet, upon this occasion, he pleaded his right of exemption from such treatment, as being a native of Tarsus, a city honoured with the freedom of Rome. A Roman citizen was not legally liable either to be bound or scourged: therefore, when the tribune understood his privilege, he stopped farther proceedings, and was something apprehensive for himself, that he had in part violated them already, by ordering him to be bound;* but, being still desirous to know what was laid to his charge, he convened the chief priests, and the members of the Sanhedrim on the next day; and brought him again before them.

The apostle, fixing his eyes upon the high-priest and council, as one who was neither ashamed or afraid to appear at their tribunal, began (Acts xxiii) with a declaration, that he had lived to that day in the exercise of a good conscience; but Ananias, the high-priest, forgetting his character as a judge, commanded those who stood near to strike him on the face. The apostle severely rebuked his partiality, in perverting the cause of justice, and warned him of the righteous judgment of God, the supreme Judge, who would surely punish his hypocrisy.† His reply to those who reproved him for speaking in such terms to the high-priest, seems to intimate, that the injurious treatment he had received had raised an undue warmth in his spirit, though it may be supposed that he denounced his future doom under a superior and prophetic impulse; but knowing that the council was composed of Pharisees and Sadducees, who were at variance amongst themselves about several weighty points, particularly the doctrine of a resurrection, he declared himself a Pharisee, and that the opposition he met with from the Sadducees, was owing to his belief and hope in that doctrine. The Pharisees immediately suspended their present resentment, to embrace the occasion offered of opposing their old antago-

* A Roman citizen might be bound with a chain, but not tied with thongs, or beaten with rods: "Facinus est vincere civem Romanum, scelus verberari"—*Cicero.*

† Thou whited wall!—A clay wall, glossed over with white, is an apt emblem of a man who carries on a malicious design under the pretence and forms of justice. Hateful is the character and dreadfully dangerous the condition of such.

nists, and, upon this issue, espoused his cause, declaring him innocent; and said, that if a spirit or angel (the existence of both which the Sadducees denied) had spoken to him, they ought not to fight against God by refusing to hear him. Upon this a great dissension took place, and Lysias, fearing that Paul would be torn in pieces between the contending parties, put an end to the conference, and ordered the soldiers to take him by force, and secure him in the castle. It is indeed often well for believers, that the people of the world, though agreed in one point, namely, to oppose the gospel, are divided and subdivided in other respects; so that, for the sake of a favourite passion, or to cross an opposite interest, they will sometimes protect those whom they would otherwise willingly destroy.

The next night he received full amends for all he had suffered, and was confirmed against the utmost efforts of his enemies' malice; for the Lord Jesus, whom he served, vouchsafed to appear to him in a vision, commanded him to be of good cheer, owned his gracious acceptance of his late testimony in Jerusalem, and promised that none should hinder him the honour of bearing witness to his truth at Rome likewise. The world has been sometimes surprised at the confidence which the faithful servants of Christ have shown in the midst of dangers, and in the face of death; but if their supports were known, the wonder would cease. If the Lord speaks, his word is effectual; and when he says, Be of good courage, and fear not! his people, out of weakness, are made strong.

Little were the incredulous Jews aware of what a power and vigilance were engaged in his preservation; and, therefore, impatient of delays, they resolved to destroy him immediately. To manifest their resolution, and to quicken their diligence, more than forty of them bound themselves, under the penalty of the great curse, or anathema, not to eat or drink till they had killed him. They acquainted the priests and rulers with their engagement, and proposed that they should request Lysias to order him once more to appear before them in the council, and that then those who had combined in this oath would be ready to assassinate him. But no counsel or device can stand against the Lord! This black design was, by some means, providentially made known to a young man, who was Paul's sister's son, who gave notice of it first to him, and then, by his desire, to Lysias, who, finding the Jews implacably bent against Paul's life, determined to place him farther out of their reach, and accordingly sent him away, that same night, under a strong guard, who conducted him to Cæsarea, and delivered him to Felix the Roman governor, together with a letter from Lysias, importing his care to preserve the prisoner, because he understood him to be a Roman citizen, and that he had commanded his accusers to follow. Thus the conspiracy which his enemies had formed to destroy him, proved the occasion of his deliverance out of their hands.

In about five days afterwards, Ananias the high-priest, with the elders of the council, appeared before Felix against Paul, Acts xxiv. The charge was opened by Tertullus, a venal orator, or advocate, whom they had retained for this purpose: who began with a commendation of the governor, in terms which might have suited the illustrious actions and wise measures of princes studious of the public good, but were ill applied to Felix (who was infamous for his cruelty and oppression,) and in the name of the Jews who hated him. But enmity to the gospel will make men stoop to the meanest flattery and servility, if by that means they have hope of gaining their point! The sum of the accusation was, that Paul was an enemy to church and state, a disturber of the established religion, and a mover of sedition against the government; to which was added, as a popular proof of the charge, that he was a ringleader of the sect or heresy of the Nazarenes, so called from Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified by a former governor for asserting himself to be a king. Thus much seems implied in the term Nazarene, as the Jews used it. The apostle began his defence with a protestation of his innocence, as to any design of moving sedition or tumult, which he said his enemies were unable to prove by a single fact: he proceeded to inform the governor of the true motives of their enmity against him, and acknowledged that he worshipped God in a way which they stigmatized with the name of heresy or division; for the proper* meaning of heresy is no more than sect or party. By farther declaring, that he worshipped the God of his fathers, and believed all things written in the law and the prophets, he proved, from the object and the manner of his worship, that he was not guilty of any blameable innovations; he professed the hope of a resurrection, which his enemies could not but allow, and that it was his constant study† (Acts xxiv.

* As the apostle only cautions Titus to reject or avoid a heretic, Tit. iii. 10, but has not defined him expressly, many writers and teachers have had a fair field to exercise their skill or their passions upon the subject; yet the question is far from determined to this day. Some would treat all those as heretics, who differ from them either in judgment or practice; others explain the word quite away, as though the admonition to avoid a heretic, was wholly unnecessary. Perhaps the advice to Titus, is nearly, if not exactly, equivalent to Rom. xvi. 17. The spirit of truth produces unity; the spirit of division is heresy. And the man who fiercely stickles for opinions of his own, who acts contrary to the peaceable, forbearing, humble spirit of the gospel, who affects to form a party, and to be thought considerable in it, is so far a heretic.

† The Greek word (ασκεω) here used, denotes the

16,) and endeavour to maintain a conscience void of offence; and, added, that it was not he, but the Jews themselves, who had raised the tumult, by assaulting him, when he was peaceably attending in the temple, according to the prescribed rules. He observed, that his first accusers were not present, as they ought to have been; and challenged any who were within hearing to prove their allegations in any one instance.

Felix, having perhaps a favourable opinion of the christian profession, which had been settled some time at Cæsarea, and being likewise desirous of further information, deferred the full discussion of the affair till the arrival of Lysias, and committed Paul, in the mean time, to the care of a centurion, as a prisoner at large, allowing him to go abroad in the city, and giving his friends liberty to visit him at home. And thus he was providentially delivered from the blood-thirsty Jews, and found an asylum in the Roman power, which they had endeavoured to engage for his destruction.

A. D. 59.] He was sent for not long after, by Felix, and discoursed before him and his wife Drusilla concerning the faith of Christ. Curiosity was the governor's motive; but the apostle, who knew his character, was faithful to him, and would not speak of the faith of Christ only, to one who could not understand it, but made a home application by enlarging on righteousness, temperance, and the important consequences of a future judgment. These were fit topics to press upon an unjust and rapacious governor, who lived in adultery, Drusilla (his reputed wife,) having forsaken a lawful husband to live with him. She was by birth a Jewess, daughter of the Herod whose death we have already mentioned; and having renounced her religion and her husband, for Felix, was, by the judgment of God, given up to hardness of heart; so that it does not appear that the apostle's discourse made any impression upon her. It was otherwise with Felix, who, though a wicked man, had sinned against less light: he trembled at what he heard, and not able to conceal his concern, he cut short the interview, with a promise to send for him again, at a convenient season. So great sometimes is the power of truth, when faithfully enforced! With this only advantage on his side, Paul the prisoner triumphs over a haughty governor, and makes him tremble. Great likewise is the power of sin! Felix trembled at the review of the past, and the prospect of the future; but he could not stop; he found some avocation for his present relief, and put off his most important concerns to a future opportunity, which it is probable never came. He saw and heard Paul afterwards; but the same man had no more the same influence; the accompanying force of the Spirit was withheld; and then he had no farther view in conversing with him, but the hope of receiving money for his enlargement. When the apostle had continued in this situation about two years, Felix was recalled from his government. He had governed the Jews with severity and injustice, and had reason to fear they would accuse him to the emperor: therefore, to ingratiate himself with them, he left Paul in his confinement, thinking that the detention of the person they hated might make them more readily excuse what was past; or at least, he durst not provoke them farther by releasing him.

A. D. 60.] When Festus, who succeeded Felix in the government, went up to Jerusalem (Acts xxv,) the high-priest and elders applied to him, and requested that Paul might be sent thither to be tried before the council; and they appointed proper instruments to assault and murder him in the journey. It seems they expected this favour would be easily granted, as it is usual for governors, at their first coming among a people, to do some popular act; but Festus refused, and commanded them to follow him to Cæsarea, where he himself would judge in the cause. The Jews accordingly exerted themselves in one more effort, and when Festus was returned to Cæsarea, presented themselves before him on an appointed day; and Paul being brought into the court, they accused him heavily, as they had done before, and to as little effect, not being able to prove any thing against him, or to invalidate his protestation that he had committed no offence, either against the law, or the temple, or the Roman government. Festus, who had refused to send him to Jerusalem before, was now willing to oblige them, perceiving the controversy was of a religious kind, and what he had little knowledge of; he therefore asked Paul if he was willing to be tried, in his presence, before the council at Jerusalem. The apostle, who knew what treatment he might expect from the Jews, answered, That he was then at Cæsar's judgment-seat, where he ought to be tried, and that, if found guilty, he was not unwilling to suffer; but that, against the proposal of being delivered up to those who thirsted for his blood, he appealed to Cæsar. This was one privilege of a Roman citizen, that, when he thought himself aggrieved in an inferior court, he might, by entering such an appeal, put a stop to proceedings, and refer the cause

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study, diligence, and proficiency of a person who is desirous to excel and be eminent in any particular art; as a painter, for instance, he searches out the best masters and the best pieces, he studies and copies the beauties of others' works, and is continually retouching and improving upon his own; his acquaintance, reflections, and recreations, are all accommodated to his main purpose; and though his pencil is sometimes at rest, his imagination is seldom idle. Similar to this is the exercise of a good conscience formed upon the model of the scriptures, and improved by diligence, meditation, examination, and experience.

to the immediate determination of the emperor. From the example of St. Paul, who counted not his life dear, but was willing, not only to be bound, but to die for the Lord Jesus, we learn that it is very allowable for a christian to avail himself of the laws and privileges of his country, when unjustly persecuted for rightcousness sake; and perhaps, in some cases, it would be blameable to omit it. Civil liberty is a *depositum* with which we are entrusted for posterity, and, by all lawful means, should be carefully preserved. Festus, after having consulted with his council and lawyers upon this unexpected turn, admitted the appeal, and determined he should be sent to Rome. Paul had long had a desire to visit the believers in that city, and had formed some plans concerning it. But it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. His way was now opened in a manner he had not thought of, but in such a manner as made it more evident that his bonds proved to the furtherance of the gospel.

Soon after this, Agrippa, son of the late Herod, who had large territories, and the title of king, under the Romans, came with his sister Bernice, to congratulate Festus upon his accession to his government: he was a man of a fair character, a professed Jew, but possessed of moderation and prudence. During their stay, Festus informed them of what had lately happened concerning Paul. The whole that he understood of the affair was, that he had not been guilty of any crime, but that his accusers had certain questions against him, of their own superstitions, and concerning one Jesus, who was dead, and whom Paul affirmed to be alive. To him the life and the death of Jesus were points of equal indifference; not so to those who believe he died for them, and who expect that, because he lives, they shall live also. This imperfect account made Agrippa desirous to hear Paul himself; and accordingly, the next day, Agrippa, Bernice, and Festus, being seated in court,* attended by their officers and train, and a number of the principal people, Paul was once more brought forth to speak in public for himself, Acts xxvi. On this occasion he addressed himself particularly to Agrippa; and, having expressed his satisfaction that he was permitted to speak before one who was so well acquainted with the laws and customs of the Jews, he related the cause of his present confinement: he professed his faith and hope in the scriptures; and then, as he had done before, he gave him an account of the extraordinary means by which he had been changed† from a persecutor to a follower of Jesus, in his journey to Damascus. His defence, therefore (as has been formerly observed,) was rather experimental than argumentative, and made very different impressions upon his hearers. Festus, who seems to have had a good opinion of his sincerity and intention, yet, supposing no man in his sober senses could believe such a strange story, interrupted him in his narration, and, with an air rather of pity than indignation, said, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning hath made thee mad."‡ A similar judgment is passed by too many upon all who profess an acquaintance with the life of faith in an unseen Jesus; but ordinarily, now, the effect is not ascribed to the excess of learning, but to the want of it, as, on the other hand, a man who maintains the wildest absurdities, puts his judgment and understanding to little hazard in the world's esteem, if his chimeras are set off with a competent apparatus of literature. Agrippa, however, was differently affected, especially when Paul made a bold appeal to himself, concerning the notoriety of the facts which had lately happened, and the truth of the prophecies with which they were connected. Here the power of truth triumphed again, and Agrippa was so struck, that, without regarding the numerous assembly, or the displeasure such a declaration might give both to the Jews and Romans, particularly to Festus, who had expressed his sentiment just before, he gave way to the emotions of his mind, and said aloud, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a christian." Yet this was but an involuntary conviction; it did honour to the apostle, but was of no benefit to himself. And the concession, which, at first view, seems to proceed from an ingenuous spirit, when closely examined, amounts but to this, that though Agrippa was indeed convinced of the truth, his heart was so attached to the present evil world, that he had neither courage nor will to follow it; as when we say of a picture, It looks almost alive, we do not mean strictly that there is any more life in the painting than in the canvass on which it is drawn, but only that the resemblance is strong: so the almost christian, however specious in his professions, is still destitute of that living principle which alone can enable him to make them good, and is, in reality, an utter stranger to true christianity. In the

* The apology St. Paul made for himself was not his trial. He had already stopped all proceedings at law by his appeal to Cæsar; nor was Festus then as a judge upon his tribunal.

† Speaking of his past conduct towards the disciples, he calls it *madness,—being exceedingly*, or (as we express it,) raging *mad against them*. A man in this state will attack any person he meets; he waits for no provocation, listens to no entreaty, regards no consequences. Thus the apostle judged of himself when a persecutor of the church; and the spirit of persecution in every age has been the same. May God restore those to their right minds who are governed by it!

‡ His answer to Festus is expressed with much accuracy and precision. "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth (ἀποφθέγγομαι) the words of truth and soberness." Madness discovers itself either in the apprehension of a false object, or in the false apprehension of a true one. The things he spoke of were true in themselves, and his ideas of them just and proportionate.

graceful return the apostle made to the king's acknowledgment he hinted at this defect, wishing that both Agrippa, and all who heard him, were not only almost, but altogether, as he was himself, with an exception to the chains he wore for the cause of the gospel. This answer discovers, in one view, the confidence he had in his cause, the happy frame of his mind, the engaging turn of his address, and his unbounded benevolence: he could wish nothing better than what he himself felt, to his dearest friends, and he wished nothing worse to his greatest enemies; nay, he wished that his enemies might, if possible, experience all his comforts, without any of his trials. When Festus and Agrippa were withdrawn, they agreed, in their opinion, that he had done nothing deserving of death, or even of imprisonment, and that he might have been released, if he had not himself prevented it by appealing to Cæsar.

In consequence of the determination to send him to Rome (Acts xxvii,) he was committed to the custody of a centurion named Julius, with whom he embarked in a vessel that was on a trading voyage to several parts of the Lesser Asia. Aristarchus, and some other of his friends, went with him, and particularly the evangelist Luke, who seems to have been the inseparable companion of his travels from the first time he was at Troas. They touched the following day at Sidon, where the centurion gave him liberty to refresh himself and visit his friends. At their next port, Myria in Lycia, a vessel offering which was bound directly for Italy, they went on board her. In the beginning of this passage they were retarded by contrary winds. At length they reached the island of Crete (now called Candia;) and having put into a port, called the Fair-havens, Paul would have persuaded them to have staid there, intimating that, as the winter was now advancing, they would meet with many inconveniences and dangers if they ventured to proceed any further. Long voyages were seldom attempted during the winter in those days, or, for many ages after, till the knowledge of the compass made way for those great improvements in navigation which now embolden the mariner to sail indifferently at any season of the year. But it is probable the apostle's precaution was not merely founded upon the obvious disadvantages of the season, but rather upon an extraordinary pre-intimation of what was soon to happen. But his remonstrance was over-ruled, the centurion preferring the judgment of the master of the ship, who thought it best, if possible, to reach another haven at the west end of the island, which was thought to be more commodious and safe than the place Paul proposed. A favourable wind springing from the south, determined their resolve, and they set sail with a good confidence of soon reaching their desired port.

There is little doubt but Paul's case and character had by this time engaged the notice of many of his fellow-passengers in the ship. Upon a superficial inquiry, they would learn, that he was the follower of one Jesus, who had been crucified; that he was esteemed a setter-forth of strange gods, and charged with having disturbed the public peace wherever he came. He probably took frequent occasions to speak of his Lord and Master to those about him; and as he had several companions, the manner of their social worship could hardly pass unobserved; but no emergency had as yet occurred to manifest the solidity and force of his principles to full advantage, and to make it evident to all with whom he sailed, that his God was far unlike the idols of the Heathens; and that the religion which prompted him to do and suffer so much for the sake of Jesus, was founded, not in the imaginations and inventions of men, but in reality and truth. In prosperous circumstances, most people are easily satisfied with their own principles, and are ready to take it for granted, that even the notions received from no better source than tradition or custom, cannot be wrong, or at least will not be dangerous: but it is in a season of common distress that the truth and efficacy of vital religion appear with the most incontestible authority. The God who alone can deliver when all hope of safety is taken away, and the religion which can inspire a man with confidence and peace, when there is nothing but dismay and confusion around him, will then extort some acknowledgment, even from those who had before thought of them with indifference. From these considerations, we may collect one general reason why the Lord, who, by his divine providence, adjusts the time and circumstances of every event, and without whose permission not a sparrow can fall to the ground, permits his faithful people to be so often exercised with severe trials: it is, to manifest that their hopes are well-grounded; that they have not taken up with words and notions, but have a real and sure support, and can hope and rejoice in God under those pressures which deprive others of all their patience, and all their courage; and, on the other hand, to evince that his power and faithfulness are surely engaged on their behalf; that he puts an honour upon their prayers, is near to help them in the time of trouble, and can deliver them out of their greatest extremities. We are not, then, to wonder that this favoured servant of the Lord, after having endured so many sufferings and hardships upon the land, was exposed, in the course of this voyage, to equal dangers and difficulties upon the sea; for they had not long quitted their last port, be-

fore their hopes of gaining a better were blasted: they were overtaken by a sudden and violent storm. The name given it by the historian, Euroclydon, expresses its direction to have been from the eastern quarter, and its energy upon the waves. The tempest irresistibly overpowered the mariners, and rendered their art impracticable and vain: they were compelled to abandon the ship to the direction of the wind, and were hurried away, they knew not where. Mention is made of the difficulty they had to secure the ship's boat, as the only probable means of escaping, if they should be wrecked, which yet, in the event, was wholly useless to them; likewise of their endeavours to strengthen the ship by girding her with ropes, and of their throwing a considerable part of the lading and tackling into the sea. In this distressed situation, expecting every hour to be either swallowed up by the waves, or dashed to pieces against unknown rocks or shores, they continued fourteen days.—When they were almost worn out with hardship and anxiety, and there was no human probability of deliverance, the Lord manifested the care he had of his servants. The seamen had not seen sun or stars for many days; but his eye had been upon Paul and his companions every moment. No one on board could even conjecture into what part of the sea the ship was driven; but the Lord knew, and his angels knew: and now one was commanded to appear, to comfort the apostle, and to give him a word of comfort for all on board. Upon this he addressed the people in the ship, exhorting them to take some food, and to be of good courage; for that the God to whom he belonged, and whom he served, had given him assurance, by an angel, not only of his own safety, but that the lives of all on board should be preserved for his sake; that the ship would be cast upon a certain island; but he fully relied on the promise, that not one of them should be lost. He had been told, that he must stand before Cæsar, which was a sufficient earnest of his preservation; for who, or what, can disappoint the purpose of God! Amidst all these threatening appearances, Paul was, in reality, as safe in the storm as Cæsar could be thought upon the throne. And thus all his servants are inviolably preserved by his watchful providence; so that neither elements nor enemies can hurt them, till the work he has appointed them is accomplished.

At length the seamen perceived indications that they were drawing near to land: and when they were driven into a convenient depth of water, they cast anchor, and waited for the approach of day. In this interval the people were encouraged by Paul's advice and example, to eat a hearty meal, by which their strength and spirits were recruited to sustain the fatigue they were yet to undergo. In the morning they saw an island; but knew it not. The mariners, regarding their own safety only, were about to make their escape in the boat; but Paul, informing the soldiers that they could not be saved unless the seamen remained in the ship, they paid so much regard to his judgment as immediately to cut the ropes by which the boat was fastened, and give her up to the sea.

Their only remaining resource was, to force the ship upon the shore, in a place where landing would be most practicable; and of this the mariners were the most proper judges. If this island, as is generally supposed, was that which we now call Malta, we know that it is almost environed with rocks. They having therefore discovered an open bay, with a beach of sand or pebbles,* endeavoured to run the ship there; but had the management of this business been left to the soldiers and passengers, who were unexperienced in sea-affairs, they might probably have let her drive at random against the rocks where an escape would, humanly speaking, have been impossible. In this view, we may observe, that the apostle's firm confidence in the promise he had received was connected with prudent attention to the means in their power, from which the promise received was so far from dispensing them, that it was their chief encouragement to be diligent in employing them. This incident may be applied to points of more general importance: and, if carefully attended to, might have determined or prevented many unnecessary and perplexing disputes concerning the divine decrees, and their influence on the contingencies of human life. What God has appointed shall surely come to pass: but in such a manner, that all the means and secondary causes, by which he has determined to fulfil his designs, shall have their proper place and subserviency. Accordingly they made the best of their way to the shore: but before they quite reached it, the ship was stopped by a point or bank,† where her fore-part stuck fast, and remained immoveable; but her stern or hinder part, was presently broken by the violence of the surges. In the general confusion, the soldiers, unmindful how much they were indebted to Paul, proposed that all the prisoners should be killed without distinction, lest they should be accountable if any of them escaped; but the centurion, who interested

* "They discovered a certain creek with a shore." But there was a shore all round the island. Αἰγιαλος does not express the sea-coast in general, or a rocky craggy shore, but the skirts of an open bay, convenient for launching, landing, or drawing a net for fish. See Matth. xiii. 2. 48; John xxi. 4. A mariner who understood Greek would perhaps render the sentence thus: "They observed a certain bay, with a beach." And this they chose as the most likely place to get safe to land.

† Τοπου διθαλασσου is rendered in our version, *a place where two seas met;* but there is nothing answerable to the word *met.* Probably it means what the mariners call a spit, or point of sand running off from the shore, and which had a sufficient depth of water on either side.

himself in his preservation, rejected the motion, and commanded every one to do what they could for their own safety. Many who could swim cast themselves into the sea; the rest availed themselves of planks and broken pieces of the ship; and the merciful providence of the Lord gave their endeavours success; so that the whole company, consisting of two hundred and seventy-six persons, came safe to land.

The inhabitants (Acts xxviii,) though called barbarians, received and accommodated them with great humanity, and manifested a tenderness too rarely found upon such occasions amongst those who bear the name of christians: they brought them under cover, and kindled fires to warm and dry them. The apostle, who cheerfully suited himself to all circumstances, assisted in supplying the fire with fuel; but having gathered a parcel of sticks, a viper, which was unperceived in the midst of them, fastened itself upon his hand. He had just escaped from storm and shipwreck, and was exposed to as great a danger of another kind. Such is the nature of our present state; and it is a proof of our pride and ignorance, that we are seldom greatly apprehensive for ourselves, but when some formidable appearance is before our eyes. A tempest, pestilence, or earthquake, alarms us, and not without reason; but alas! we are not such mighty creatures, as to have nothing to fear but from such powerful agents. A tyle, a fly, a hair, or a grain of sand, are sufficient instruments, in the hand of God, to remove a king from the throne to the grave, or to cut off the conqueror at the head of his victorious armies. On the other hand, those who serve the Lord, and trust in him, are equally safe under all events; neither storms, nor flood, nor flames, nor the many unthought-of evils which lurk around in the smoothest scenes of life, have permission to hurt them till their race is finished, and then it little signifies by what means they are removed into their Master's joy. The apostle in the strength of divine faith, shook off the venomous creature into the fire, and remained unmoved and unhurt. The islanders, who saw what had passed, judged at first (from those faint apprehensions of a superior power inflicting punishment on the wicked, which seem to remain in the darkest and most ignorant nations,) that he was certainly a murderer, who, though he had escaped the seas, was pursued by vengeance, and marked out for destruction; but when, after expecting for some time to see him drop down dead, they found that he had received no harm, they retracted their censure, and conceived him to be a god, or something more than man. This event probably prepared them to hear him with attention.

The apostle and his friends were courteously entertained three days by Publius, the chief person of the island, who resided near the place of their landing: He requited the kindness of his host, by restoring to health his father, who had been some time ill of a fever and dysentery. In the same manner he laid his hands on many sick persons, who were healed in answer to his prayers. These acceptable services procured him much favour from the inhabitants; and when, after three months stay, he was about to depart, they furnished him liberally with necessary provisions for his voyage.

A. D. 61.] They sailed from thence in a ship of Alexandria that had wintered in the island; and stopping three days at Syracuse in Sicily soon after arrived at Rhegium, and from thence in two days, at Puteoli, near Naples, where they disembarked, and continued a week, at the request of the christians of the place. From Puteoli to Rome their journey lay about one hundred miles by land.

The disciples at Rome having heard of Paul's approach, several of them met him at a place called Appii Forum, and another party at the Three Taverns; the former place being about fifty, and the other thirty miles from the city. At the sight of these believers, whom he had loved unseen, we are told he thanked God, and took courage. Even the apostle Paul, though habitually flaming with zeal and love, was not always in the same frame. We learn from his own account of himself, that he had sometimes sharp exercises of mind; and perhaps this was such a time when his thoughts were much engaged on what awaited him upon his arrival at Rome, and his appearance before the cruel and capricious Nero. The Lord has so constituted his body, the church, that the different members are needful and helpful to each other, and the stronger are often indebted to the weaker. St. Paul himself was revived and animated at this juncture by the sight of those who were in every respect inferior to him; it rejoiced him to see that Christ his Lord was worshipped at Rome also; and being in the presence of those with whom he could open his mind, and freely confer upon the glorious truths that filled his heart, he forgot at once the fatigue he had lately suffered, and the future difficulties he had reason to expect.

Upon their arrival at Rome, the centurion delivered up the prisoners to the proper officer; but Paul had the favour allowed him to live in a house which he hired, under the guard of one soldier. Here he immediately discovered his usual activity of spirit in his Master's cause; and, without losing time, sent on the third day for the principal persons of the Jews (according to his general custom of making the first declarations of the gospel to them,) and acquainted them with the cause of his prosecution and appeal; he

assured them that he had no intention, in vindicating himself, to lay any thing to the charge of his own people; adding, that, not for any singularities of his own, or for any offence against the law of Moses, but for the hope of Israel, he was bound with the chain* he then wore. They answered that they had received no information concerning him from Judea; but that they understood the sect to which he professed an attachment was every where spoken against; they therefore desired to hear his sentiments, and appointed a day for the purpose, when many of them came to him, and he spent the whole day, from morning till evening, in proving, confirming, and explaining, the nature and necessity of the gospel and kingdom of Christ, from the books of Moses and the prophets. His discourse had good effect upon some, but others believed not, and they departed with considerable disagreement among themselves; the apostle taking leave of them with that solemn warning, which our Lord had often used in the course of his ministry, from the prophecy of Isaiah (chap. i. 9, 10,) denouncing incurable and judicial blindness and hardness of heart upon those who wilfully rejected the proposal of the truth.

He remained a prisoner in his own hired house for the space of two years, having an unrestrained liberty to receive all who came to him, and to preach the glad tidings of salvation by Christ; which we learn from his epistles (Philip i. 12,) he did with so much success, that his imprisonment evidently contributed to the furtherance of the gospel, enlarged the number of believers, and animated the zeal and confidence of those who had already received faith and grace.

A. D. 63.] The history of St. Luke ends here, which I have followed more closely than I at first designed, partly because the facts he has recorded suggests many reflections which have more or less a reference to our main design, and partly from a reluctance to leave the only sure and incontestible history by which our researches into the establishment and state of the primitive church can be guided; for though some monuments of the early ages of christianity, which are still extant, have a great share of merit, and will afford us materials to make good our plan, yet they must be selected with caution, for it would be a want of ingenuousness not to acknowledge, that there are great mixtures and blemishes to be found in the writings of those who lived nearest to the apostles' times; and in the most ancient historical remains several things have a place, which show, that a spirit of credulity and superstition had very early and extensive influence; the evident traces of which have given too fair an occasion to some persons of more learning than candour, to attempt to bring the whole of those records into disrepute. But where the characteristic genius and native tendency of the gospel are rightly understood, and carefully attended to, a mind, not under the power of bias and prejudice, will be furnished with sufficient *data*, whereby to distinguish what is genuine and worthy of credit from the spurious and uncertain additions which have been incautiously received.

I shall be brief in deducing our history from this period to the close of the first century. St. Paul, after more than two years confinement at Rome, having not yet finished his appointed measure of service, was providentially preserved from the designs of all his enemies, and set at liberty. We are told by some, that in pursuance of the design he had long before expressed, he went into Spain, and from thence to Gaul, now called France; nor have endeavours been wanting to prove, that he preached the gospel even in the British isles. That he, at some time, accomplished his desire of visiting Spain, is not improbable; but we have no certain evidence that he did so: much less is there any ground for supposing that he was either in France or Britain. From his own writings, however, we have good reason to believe, that, upon his dismission from Rome, he revisited the churches of Syria, and some other parts of Asia; for, in his epistle to the Hebrews, he mentions his purpose of seeing them, in company with his beloved Timothy; and writing to Philemon, who lived at Colosse, he requests him to prepare him a lodging, for that he hoped to be with him shortly. And it was probably in this progress that he preached in Crete, and committed the churches he gathered there to the care of Titus; for we have no account in the Acts, of his having visited that island before, except the little time he touched there in his passage to Rome, which seems not to have been sufficient for so great a work. How he was employed afterwards we know not; but it is generally agreed, that, towards the latter part of Nero's reign, he returned to Rome, and there received the crown of martyrdom.

In the accounts preserved of the rest of the apostles, we likewise meet with great uncertainty; nor can any thing be determined to satisfaction, concerning either the seat of their labours, or the time and manner of their deaths. I shall therefore wave a detail of what is not supported by sufficient proof. I only observe concerning St. Peter, that the assertion of his having been bishop of Rome, on which (and not on the true rock) the whole system of the Papacy is built, is not

* Among the Romans, the prisoner was always chained to the soldier or soldiers who guarded him. St. Paul speaks of his chain both to friends and enemies, with an indifference that shows how well content he was to wear it for his Master's sake. See Ephes. vi. 20; 2 Tim. i. 16

only inconsistent with what is recorded of him in the Acts, and the silence of St. Paul concerning him, in the epistles he wrote from thence, but it is so far without foundation in ecclesiastical history, that it still remains a point of dubious controversy, whether he ever saw Rome in his life: if he did, it was probably towards the close of it; and the most received opinion is, that he suffered martyrdom there at the same time with St. Paul: that Peter was crucified, and that Paul had the favour of being beheaded, in consideration that he was a Roman citizen.

The christians, though generally despised, and often insulted for their profession, had not hitherto been subject to a direct and capital persecution; but Nero, who, intoxicated with power, had, in a few years, arrived at a pitch of wickedness and cruelty till then unheard of, at length directed his rage against the servants of Christ.

A. D. 64.] In his tenth year the city of Rome was set on fire, and a very considerable part of it consumed. This calamity was generally imputed to him as the author, and it seems not without justice. Mischief, and the misery of others, were the study of his life; and he is reported to have expressed great pleasure at the spectacle, and to have sung the burning of Troy while Rome was in flames. Though he afterwards did many popular things, and spared no expense in relieving the people and rebuilding the city, he could not clear himself from the suspicion of the fact, any otherwise than by charging it upon the christians. The heathen historian Tacitus, in his account of this event, enables us so well to judge of the character which the christians bore in his time, that I shall subjoin a translation of it for the information of the unlearned.

"But neither the emperor's donations, nor the atonements offered to the gods, could remove the scandal of this report; but it was still believed that the city had been burnt by his instigation. Nero, therefore, to put a stop to the rumour, charged the fact, and inflicted the severest punishment for it upon the christians, as they were commonly called, a people detestable for their crimes. The author of this sect was Christ; who, in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death by Pontius Pilate. The destructive superstition, which was by this means suppressed for the present, soon broke out again, and not only overspread Judea, where it first arose, but reached even to Rome, where all abominations, from every quarter, are sure to meet and to find acceptance. Some who confessed themselves christians were first apprehended, and a vast multitude afterwards, upon their impeachment, who were condemned, not so much for burning the city, as for being the objects of universal hatred. Their sufferings and torments were heightened by mockery and derision. Some were inclosed in the skins of wild beasts, that they might be torn in pieces by dogs; others were crucified; and others, being covered with inflammable matter, were lighted up as torches at the close of day. These spectacles were exhibited in Nero's gardens; where he held a kind of Circensian show, either mixing with the populace in the habit of a charioteer, or himself contending in the race. Hence it came to pass, that, criminal and undeserving of mercy as they were, yet they were pitied, as being destroyed merely to gratify his savage and cruel disposition, and not with any view to the public good."

From this quotation it appears that the christians were considered by the heathens as a sect that had been almost crushed by the death of their Master, but suddenly recovered strength, and spread far and near soon afterwards; that they were so extremely odious, on account of the supposed absurdity and wickedness of their principles, as to be thought capable of committing the worst crimes, when no sufficient proof could be found of their having committed any; that they were treated as the professed enemies of mankind, and therefore, upon the first occasion that offered, were promiscuously destroyed, with the most unrelenting cruelty; that they did not suffer as common malefactors, who, when under the actual punishment of their crimes, are usually beheld with some commiseration, but that insult and derision were added to the most exquisite inventions of torture; and, lastly, that, if these violent proceedings were blamed by any, it proceeded rather from the hatred they bore to Nero, than from a suspicion that the christians met with any thing more than their just desert. These things are carefully to be observed, if we would form a right judgment of the primitive church. It is possible many persons suppose that St. Paul's epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, and Ephesians were (like the pastoral letters of bishops in our own times) addressed to the bulk of the inhabitants in those places; but the case was far otherwise. The Romans, to whom St. Paul wrote, were inconsiderable for their number, most of them contemptible in the sight of the world on account of their poverty and low rank in life, and (as the above extract from Tacitus proves) the objects of public detestation, for their attachment to the name and doctrines of Jesus.

Whether this persecution was confined to Rome, or carried on by public authority through all the provinces where christians were to be found, is not absolutely certain, though the latter seems most probable; for it is hardly to be supposed that Nero would rage against them in the capital, and suffer them to live in peace every where else.

Tertullian expressly asserts that Nero enjoined their destruction by public edicts in the several provinces; and his testimony seems worthy of credit, as he mentions it in his Apology, which, though written more than a century afterwards, was not at so great a distance of time but he might easily have been contradicted, if he had advanced an untruth. Besides, the example of Nero, without his express injunctions, seems to have been sufficient to awaken persecution against a people so generally hated as the christians were. Multitudes upon this occasion had the honour to seal their profession with their blood; but the cause for which they suffered triumphed over all opposition, and the martyrs' places in the church were supplied by an accession of fresh converts.

This storm, though sharp, was not of very long continuance; it terminated with the life of Nero, who was compelled, though with extreme reluctance, to destroy himself with his own hands, that he might escape the most ignominious punishment, he having been, by a decree of the senate, justly and solemnly branded with the character which malice and ignorance would have fixed upon the christian name, and condemned to be whipped to death as an enemy of the human race.

A. D. 68, 69.] After him, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius were successively acknowledged emperors; but their reigns were short, and their deaths violent. The Jewish war, which ended in the final catastrophe and dispersion of that nation, was at this time carried on under the command of Vespasian, who, while engaged in that service, was saluted emperor by his army.

A. D. 70.] Upon this, leaving the conduct of the war to his son Titus, he returned to Italy, and, soon after the death of Vitellius, was peaceably established on the government. Titus having a secret commission from God (whom he knew not,) to execute his fierce displeasure against the Jews, upon whom wrath was now come to the uttermost, after destroying the whole country of Judea with fire and sword, laid siege to Jerusalem; and, having taken it at the end of five months, with an incredible slaughter of the Jews, and the destruction of the temple, he burnt the city and pulled down the very walls. More than a million of people, who had trusted in lying words, and boasted themselves of an empty profession, perished in this war; and those who survived were reduced to slavery, sold and dispersed into all parts, at the will of the conquerors. Thus ended the Jewish economy; and the law of Moses having received the accomplishment of all its types, ceremonies, and precepts, in the person, life, and death of Jesus the Messiah, was irrevocably abrogated as to its observance, which was rendered utterly impracticable, by the destruction of the temple, and the cessation of the priesthood.

A. D. 79.] Under Vespasian, and Titus, who succeeded him, the christian church enjoyed considerable peace and liberty, though upon many occasions they suffered from the ill-will of their adversaries. Few, however, were put to death publicly and professedly for their religion, till Domitian, who came to the empire after his brother Titus [A. D. 81,] and who too much resembled Nero in his temper and conduct, imitated him likewise in his employing his power against the followers of Christ. [A. D. 94.] Several are mentioned in history, who suffered in his time; but as little of moment, or that can be fully depended on, is recorded concerning them, I wave a recital of bare names. It is generally believed that St. John was banished to the isle of Patmos by this emperor, where he wrote his Epistles to the churches of Asia, and the Revelation of future events which he had received from the Lord. Some there are who place these events much earlier, under the reign of Claudius; but the former opinion seems most probable, and best supported by the testimony of the ancients. But the story of his having been cast into a cauldron of boiling oil, in the presence (as some add) of the Roman senate, does not seem supported by any tolerable evidence. It is believed that he gained his liberty from banishment, and returned to Ephesus or the neighbouring parts; that he afterwards wrote his Gospel a little before his death, which is supposed to have happened about the last year of the century. If so, he was probably about a hundred years of age, and survived the rest of the apostles a considerable space.

Domitian, having made the earth groan under his cruelties and excesses, was assassinated in the sixteenth year of his reign. [A. D. 96.] Nerva succeeded (a man of much fairer character,) who repealed the sanguinary edicts of his predecessor; and it does not appear that the christians were generally persecuted during his short government. Before his death (for he did not live two years,) he adopted Trajan for his successor, who came to the empire [A. D. 98] with a general approbation, and is still reputed one of the best and wisest princes that Rome was favoured with. From his conduct and that of some of the following emperors, it appears, that the gospel of Christ was not only hated by such persons as Nero and Domitian, who seemed professed enemies to every thing that was good and praise-worthy, but that men who desired to be thought the patrons of virtue, and to act upon the most benevolent principles, had objections equally strong against it; for if Trajan did not issue edicts expressly against the christians, there was a very sharp

persecution carried on against them in his reign; and when Pliny (in an epistle still extant) represented to him the greatness of their sufferings, and the multitude and innocence of the sufferers, the emperor interposed no farther by his answer, than to forbid informations against them, upon suspicion, to be encouraged, but directed, that such as were proved to be christians, and refused to join in the Heathen sacrifices, should suffer death: and when he visited Asia, Ignatius, who was bishop of Antioch, being brought before him, he condemned him, with his own mouth, to be sent to Rome to be devoured by wild beasts. But we shall resume the account of what happened under his reign hereafter, his second or third year [A. D. 100] coinciding, according to the generally-received computation, with the end of the first century, which I have fixed as the limit of our researches in the present volume.*

But before I conclude the chapter, it may be useful to inquire, what might be the motives which influenced the Heathens so eagerly to embrace every occasion of showing their displeasure against the professors of christianity.

The original and proper cause of the injurious treatment the first Christians met with from the Heathens, and particularly from the Roman government, which usually tolerated every kind of religious worship that did not interfere with the public tranquillity and the obedience due to the state, was one that is of an abiding and universal influence, namely, that enmity of the carnal heart, which cannot be brought to submit to the wisdom and will of God. This has been the secret source of all the persecution which has been the lot of the true disciples of Christ in every age. The sublime doctrines of the gospel were offensive to the pretended wisdom of men, and the spirituality of its precepts no less thwarted their passions. Men, if only left to themselves, cannot but oppose a system, which at the same time, that it reduces all their boasted distinctions of character to a perfect level, in point of acceptance with God, enjoins a life and conversation absolutely inconsistent with the customs and pursuits which universally prevail, and brands many of the most allowed and authorised practices with the hard names of wickedness and folly. But they are not left to themselves, but are in a degree they are little aware of, under the influence of Satan, who, for the power he maintains and exerts over them, is styled in scripture, the God of this World. Since their own evil dispositions are thus instigated by the great enemy of God and goodness, it is entirely owing to the powerful restraints of the providence of the Most High, that his servants can at any time, or in any place, enjoy an interval of rest; and though he has always made good his promise in favour of his church, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it: though they who oppose it, successively perish, and leave their schemes unfinished, while the interest against which they rage, triumphs over all their attacks, and subsists, revives, and flourishes, amidst the changes which sweep away almost the remembrance of the most prosperous human establishments; yet he is pleased, for wise reasons, to permit them to try what they can do. Hereby the faith and patience of his people are strengthened and displayed, his care over them illustrated, and those who are sincerely devoted to him are evidently distinguished from hypocrites and pretenders, who join in an outward attachment to his gospel in times of prosperity, but are presently wearied and disgusted when storms and troubles arise.

Amongst the more particular reasons why Christianity was obnoxious to the Heathens, not only to persons of vile character, as Nero, but to such as Trajan and Marcus Aurelius, who are, even to this day, highly extolled for their probity and discernment, we may mention these that follow: and more than one of them may be easily accommodated to similar events, which stand upon the records of history down to our own times; and their effect will probably be felt by many who are yet unborn.

1. The doctrine of the cross was, and perhaps always will be, the capital offence. The christians professed to place all their hopes on the actions and sufferings of one, who died, to all appearance, like a common malefactor. This, considered in one view, was thought such a kind and degree of infatuation, as provoked the most sovereign and universal contempt; and, in another view, it raised a grave concern for the interests of morality and virtue, in those whose pride was flattered by their own empty declamations on those sounding topics. Every thing that was evil, they thought, might be expected from men who openly declared, that they hoped for eternal happiness, not for their own works, which in this connexion they depreciated and renounced, but on account of the righteousness and mediation of another. If it was possible that christians could maintain that course of conduct which the gospel requires, and, at the same time, conceal the principles and motives on which they act, they might perhaps come off more easily with the world; for the justice, temperance, goodness, and truth, which become their high calling, are suited to conciliate peace with all men. But their principles must not, cannot, be concealed. Those who know and love Jesus, and are sensible of their immense obligations to him, will glory in him, and in him only; they will avow, that it is not by their own power

* See Introduction, note.

or holiness that they escape the pollutions of the world, but that they derive all their strength from faith in his blood, and from the supports of his grace. They dare not conceal this, nor do they desire it, though they are sensible that the world, whether it bears the name of Heathen or Christian, will hate and despise them for it.

2. The Romans, though attached to their old system of idolatry, were not averse to the admission of new divinities, upon the ground of what a modern writer calls a spirit of intercommunity; that is, every one had a liberty to adopt what worship he pleased, provided due honour was given to the ancient establishments. The votaries of the Egyptian, Roman, and Syrian deities, while they paid some peculiar regard to their own favourites, indulged each other in a mutual acknowledgment of the rest: but the religion of Jesus was absolutely incompatible with them all, would admit of no competition; and his followers could not avoid declaring, upon all occasions, that they were no gods that were made with hands. On this account they were considered as a most uncharitable, proud, and narrow-hearted sect, as the Jews, for the same reason, had been before them. And thus it will always be. Nothing will more effectually secure a man in the peaceful possession of his own errors, than his pleading for the indifference of error in general, and allowing those who most widely differ from him to be all right in their own way; and this lukewarm comprehension, which is a principal part of that pretended candour and charity for which our own times are so remarkable, preserves a sort of intercourse or confederacy amongst multitudes, who are hardly agreed in any one thing but their joint opposition to the spirit and design of the gospel. But they who love the truth cannot but declare against every deviation from it; they are obliged to decline the proposed intercommunity, and to vindicate the commands and institutions of God from the inventions and traditions of men: they not only build for themselves upon the foundation which God has laid in Zion, but they are free to profess their belief, that other foundation can no man lay; that there is no other name given under heaven by which a sinner can be saved; and that none can have an interest in this name but by that faith which purifies the heart, works by love, and overcomes the world; therefore they always have been, and always will be, hated, as uncharitable and censorious, and are sure to be treated accordingly, so far as opportunity and circumstances will permit those, who think themselves aggrieved, to discover their resentment.

3. The wisest and most respectable characters among the Heathen rulers, either for reasons of state, or from their own superstition, were generally the most solicitous to preserve the old religion from innovations. The history of mankind furnishes us with frequent proofs, that persons, in other respects of the greatest penetration and genius, have often been as blindly devoted to the absurdities of a false religion as the weakest among the vulgar; or, if they have seen the folly of many things that have the sanctions of antiquity and custom; yet the maxims of a false policy, and that supposed connexion and alliance between the established religion and the welfare of the state, which has been instilled into them from their infancy, induce them to think it their interest, if not their duty, to keep up the same exterior, and to leave things as they found them. Trajan seems to have been influenced by these considerations; he was zealous for the Heathen system, in which he had been educated, and regarded it, as the Romans were accustomed to do, as the basis, or at least the chief security, of the government. The Christians, therefore, were to be punished, not only for their obstinacy in maintaining their own opinions, but as being eventually enemies to the state; for though their conduct was peaceable, and they paid a cheerful obedience to laws and governors, while they did not interfere with that obedience they owed to Christ, their supreme Lord, yet their doctrines, which struck at the very root of idolatry, made them accounted dangerous to society, and deserving to be exterminated from it.

4. These suspicions were strengthened by the great success and spread the gospel obtained in this first century: within the compass of a few years, it had extended to almost every part of the Roman empire. In this view it appeared formidable, and called for a speedy and vigorous suppression before it should become quite insuperable, by the accession of fresh strength and numbers. But the event did not answer their expectation: believers grew and multiplied, in defiance of all the cruelties exercised upon them; the numbers and constancy of the sufferers, and the gentle spirit of meekness, forgiveness, and love, which they discovered, often made lasting impressions upon the people, sometimes upon their tormentors and judges; and, by the blessing of God upon their doctrine, thus powerfully recommended by their conduct, and sealed by their blood, new converts were continually added to the church.

5. When it was thus determined to extirpate, if possible, these odious and dangerous people, pretexts and occasions were always ready: slanderous reports concerning their tenets and assemblies were industriously promoted, and willingly believed. Some of these took their rise from misapprehension; some were probably invented by those who apostatized from the church, who, to justify themselves, as well as to evince their sin-

cerity, pretended to make discoveries of horrid evils that prevailed amongst them, under the disguise of religion. Many, who would not have invented such stories themselves, were, however, well pleased to circulate what they had heard, and took it for granted, that every thing was true, which confirmed the opinion they had before entertained of this pestilential and despicable sect. But neither violence nor calumny could prevail against the cause and people of God and his Christ. They were supported by an almighty arm: and though many had the honour to lay down their lives in this glorious cause, many more were preserved, by his providence, in the most dangerous circumstances.

The gospel of Christ, though contradictory to the received opinions, laws, customs, and pursuits, of every place where it appeared, though unsupported either by arts or arms, though opposed by power and policy on every side, in a space of about sixty-six years from our Lord's ascension, according to the promise he gave his disciples, had spread successively from Jerusalem, through Judea and Samaria, even to the ends of the earth. Christians were to be found in every province where the Roman power ruled, and in most of their principal cities; and though not many noble, mighty, or wise, were called, yet some there were; and the power of the grace of Jesus was displayed in every rank of life. Courtiers, senators, and commanders, notwithstanding the difficulty of their situation, were not ashamed of his cross; and some of the learned obtained that peace and happiness, by embracing his gospel, which they had sought to no purpose in the vain intricacies of a false philosophy. Nor was the success of the gospel confined within the limits of the Roman empire, but extended eastward to Parthia and Babylon, where the Roman eagles were not acknowledged. We are not sure, however, that there were many collected societies of christians in every province, or that those societies were in general very numerous. Those parts of Asia and Greece which had been the scene of St. Paul's labours, seem to have had the greatest number of settled churches, in proportion to their extent; and their largest assemblies were probably in their principal cities, such as Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome. But we have reason to believe, from our Lord's own declarations, that real Christians, in the most flourishing times of the church, have been very few, in comparison with the many who choose the broad and beaten road which leads to destruction (Matt. vii. 13, 14:) but these few are under his conduct and blessing, as the salt of the earth, and are therefore scattered far and wide, according to the disposal of his wise providence, who appoints the time of their birth, and the bounds of their habitation.

If by the epithet primitive we mean that period during which the professed churches of Christ preserved their faith and practice remarkably pure, and uninfluenced by the spirit and maxims of the world, we cannot extend it far beyond the first century. We are sure that a mournful declension prevailed very early, and quickly spread, like a contagion, far and wide; and, indeed, the seeds of those evils which afterwards produced such a plentiful harvest of scandals and mischiefs, were already sown, and began to spring up, while the apostles were yet living. And we shall show hereafter, that the first and purest age of the church was not free from such blemishes as have been observable in all succeeding revivals of true religion. These things are to be guarded against with the utmost attention; but they will more or less appear while human nature continues in its present state of infirmity. While the professors of christianity were few in comparison of their opponents, while they were chiefly poor and obscure persons, and had sharp persecutions to grapple with, so long they preserved the integrity and purity of their profession in general; and the disorders which appeared among them were faithfully and successfully opposed and corrected; afflictions and sufferings kept them firmly united in a love to the truth, and to each other: but when they were favoured with intervals of peace, and the increase of numbers and riches seemed to give them a more fixed establishment in the world, they were soon corrupted; and that beautiful simplicity which is the characteristic of genuine christianity, was obscured by will-worship and vain reasonings. Amongst the multitudes who abandoned idolatry, and embraced the christian faith, there were several who had borne the specious name of philosophers. Some of these, on the one hand, laboured to retain as many of their favourite sentiments as they could by any means reconcile to the views they had formed of the gospel; and, on the other hand, they endeavoured, if possible, to accommodate the Christian scheme to the taste and prejudices of the times, in hopes thereby to make it more generally acceptable. Thus the doctrines of the scriptures were adulterated by those within the church, and misrepresented to those without. Perhaps the first alterations of this kind were not attempted with a bad intention, or extended to the most important points; but the precedent was dangerous; for the progress of error, like that of sin, is from small beginnings to awful and unthought-of consequences. Gospel-truth, like a bank opposed to a torrent, must be preserved entire, to be useful; if a breach is once made, though it may seem at first to be small, none but he who says to the sea, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther, can set bounds to the threatening inundation that

will quickly follow. In effect, a very considerable deviation from the plan of the apostles had taken place in the churches before the decease of some who had personally conversed with them.

We have no ecclesiastical book of this age extant worthy of notice, except that called, the first of the two epistles to the Corinthians, which are ascribed to Clement, bishop of Rome, who is supposed to be the Clement mentioned by St. Paul, in his epistle to the Romans. This epistle is not unsuitable to the character of the time when it was written, and contains many useful things; yet it is not, as we have it, free from fault, and at the best deserves no higher commendation, than as a pious well-meant performance: it stands first, both in point of time and merit, in the list of those writings which bear the name of the apostolical fathers; for the rest of them, if the genuine productions of the persons whose names they bear, were composed in the second century: for as to the epistle ascribed to Barnabas, St. Paul's companion, those who are strangers to the arguments by which many learned men have demonstrated it to be spurious, may be convinced, only by reading it, if they are in any measure acquainted with the true spirit of the apostle's writings. We are indeed assured, that both the epistles of Clement, this which bears the name of Barnabas, several said to have been written by Ignatius, the authenticity of which has likewise been disputed, one by Polycarp, and the book called the Shepherd of Hermas, which is filled with visionary fables, were all in high esteem in the first ages of the church, were read in their public assemblies, and considered as little inferior to the canonical writings; which may be pleaded as one proof of what I have advanced concerning that declension of spiritual taste and discernment which soon prevailed: for I think I may venture to say, there are few, if any of the protestant churches, but have furnished authors whose writings (I mean the writings of some one author) have far surpassed all the apostolical fathers taken together; and that not only in point of method and accuracy, but in scriptural knowledge, solid judgment, and a just application of evangelical doctrine to the purposes of edification and obedience.

But though the first christians were men subject to passions and infirmities, like ourselves, and were far from deserving, or desiring that distinguishing admiration, and implicit submission, to all their sentiments, which were paid them by the ignorance and superstition of after times; yet they were eminent for faith, love, self-denial, and a just contempt of the world; multitudes of them cheerfully witnessed to the truth with their blood, and, by their steadfastness and patience, under trials, and their harmony among themselves often extorted honourable testimonies, even from their opposers. Could they have transmitted their spirit, together with their name, to succeeding generations, the face of ecclesiastical history would have been very different from what it now bears; but, by degrees, the love of novelty, and the thirst of power, a relaxed attention to the precepts of Christ, and an undue regard to the names, authority, and pretensions of men, introduced those confusions, contentions, and enormities, which at length issued in an almost universal apostacy from that faith and course of practice which alone are worthy the name of christianity. The prosecution of this subject, more especially with a view to the history of the favoured few who were preserved from the general contagion, and of the treatment they met with, who had the courage to censure or withstand the abuses of the times they lived in, will be attempted in the following volumes of this work,* if God, in whose hands our times are, is pleased to afford opportunity, and if the specimen presented to the public, in this volume, should so far meet the approbation of competent judges, as to encourage the author to proceed.

Some particulars which may conduce to render the state of the church in the first century more evident to the reader, as well as to give light into the true state of religion amongst ourselves, and which could not be well introduced in the course of our narration, without making too frequent and too long digressions, I have, for that reason, treated of separately in the chapters that follow.

CHAPTER II.

An essay on the character of St. Paul, considered as an exemplar or pattern of a minister of Jesus Christ.

THE success with which the first promulgation of the gospel was attended, is to be ultimately ascribed to the blessing and operation of the Holy Spirit; and the great means which the Spirit of God is pleased to accompany with an efficacious power upon the souls of men, is the subject-matter of the gospel itself. He concurs with no other doctrine but that of the scripture. The most laboured endeavours to produce a moral change of heart and conduct, will always prove ineffectual, unless accommodated to the principles of revelation respecting the ruin of human nature by sin, and the only possible method of its recovery by Jesus Christ.

And as the Holy Spirit bears witness to no other doctrine, so he ordinarily restrains his blessing to those ministers who have them-

* See Introduction, note.

selves experienced the power of the truths which they deliver to others. A man may be systematically right, and strenuous in the delivery and defence of orthodox notions; yet if he is not in some degree possessed of the dispositions and motives which become a minister of the New Testament, he will seldom be honoured with much success or acceptance: the want of that disinterested and dependent frame of mind which the gospel inculcates on all who profess it, will render his labours insignificant; for the Holy Spirit, on whose influence success entirely depends, will seldom co-operate with any but those who are sincerely governed by his precepts.

A great stress therefore is laid in the New Testament, upon the principles, tempers, and conduct, which ought to distinguish the men who have the honour to be intrusted with the important charge of preaching the gospel of Christ. To delineate their proper character, and to form their manners suitable to their high calling, is the principal scope of the epistles to Timothy and Titus: and when we consider what we read there, in connexion with many passages to the same purpose, which occur occasionally in the inspired writings, we may well adopt the apostle's words, "Who is sufficient for these things?" A christian, even in private life, is exposed to innumerable snares and dangers, from his situation in an evil world, the power and subtlety of his spiritual enemies, and the influence of the body of sin in himself, which, though weakened and despoiled of dominion, is not yet destroyed. A minister of the gospel, besides these trials in common with other christians, has many peculiar to himself: His services are more difficult, his temptations more various, his conduct more noticed; many eyes are upon him,—some enviously watching for his halting, and some perhaps too readily proposing him as a pattern, and content to adopt whatever has the sanction of his example: if encouraged and acceptable, he is in danger of being greatly hurt by popularity and the favour of friends; if opposed and ill-treated (and this he must expect in some instances if he is faithful,) he is liable either to be surprised into anger and impatience, or to sink into dejection and fear. It is therefore a great encouragement to find from scripture (and not from scripture only,) how the grace of God has enabled others, in equal circumstances of danger and temptation, to rise superior to all impediments, and to maintain such a course of conduct, that they stand proposed as proper patterns for our imitation, and call upon us to be followers of them, as they were of Christ.

Amongst these the character of St. Paul shines with a superior lustre; he stands distinguished by the eminence of his knowledge, grace, labours, and success, as a noble and animating exemplar of a minister of Jesus Christ. And if it should be thought a digression from the design of an Ecclesiastical History, to allot a few pages to the consideration of his principles, and the uniform tenor of his life, yet I hope the digression will not be unprofitable in itself, or judged unsuitable to my general plan; for I proposed not to confine myself to a dry detail of facts, but to point out the genuine tendency of the gospel where it is truly received, and the spirit by which it is opposed, and to show the impossibility of reviving practical godliness by any other means than those which were so signally successful in the first age of the church.

Were I to exhibit any recent character with these views, the exceptions of partiality and prejudice would not be so easily obviated; the merits of such a character, however commendable upon the whole, would be objected to, and the incidental infirmities and indiscretions of the person (for the best are not wholly free from blemish) would be studiously collected and exaggerated as a sufficient contrast to all that could be said in his praise. But modesty forbids the same open disingenuous treatment of one who was an apostle of Christ: besides, he lived, and died long ago: and as some learned men have found, or pretended to find, a way to reconcile his writings with the prevailing taste of the times, he is commended in general terms, and claimed as a patron by all parties of the religious world; therefore I am warranted to take it for granted, that none who profess the name of Christians will be angry with me for attempting to place his spirit and conduct in as full a light as I can, or for proposing him as a proper criterion, whereby to judge of the merits and pretensions of all who account themselves ministers of Christ.

Many things worthy our notice and imitation have occurred concerning this apostle, whilst we were tracing that part of his history which St. Luke has given us in the Acts; but I would now attempt a more exact delineation of character, as it is farther exemplified in his own epistles, or may be illustrated from a review of what has been occasionally mentioned before.

We may observe much of the wisdom of God in disposing the circumstances in which his people are placed previous to their conversion: they only begin to know him when he is pleased to reveal himself to them by his grace; but he knew them long before: he determines the hour of their birth, their situation in life, and their earliest connexions: he watches over their childhood and youth, and preserves them from innumerable evils and dangers into which their follies, while in a state of ignorance and sin, might plunge them; and he permits their inclinations to take such a course, that, when he is pleased to call them to the knowledge of his

truth, many consequences of their past conduct, and the reflections they make upon them, may concur, upon the whole, in a subserviency to fit them for the services into which he designs to lead them afterwards. Thus he leads the blind by a way that they knew not, and often for the manifestation of his wisdom, power, and grace, in bringing good out of evil, he, for a season, gives them up so far to the effects of their own depravity, that, in the judgment of men, none seem more unlikely to be the subjects of his grace, than some of those whom he has purposed not only to save from ruin, but to make instrumental to the salvation of others. I doubt not but some of my readers, who are acquainted with their own hearts, will easily apply this observation to themselves; but there are instances in which the contrast is so striking and strong, that it will be made for them by those who know them. It is, however, peculiarly exemplified in the case of St. Paul: he was set apart from the womb, as he himself tells us (Gal. i. 15,) to be a chosen instrument of preaching among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. The frame of his heart, and the manner of his life, the profession he had made, and the services in which he was engaged before his conversion, were evidently suited to render him an unsuspected, as well as a zealous witness to the truth and power of the gospel, after he had embraced it. The Lord's purpose was to show the insufficiency of all legal appointments and human attainments, the power of his grace in subduing the strongest prejudices, and the riches of his mercy in pardoning the most violent attempts against his gospel. We know not how this purpose could have been more effectually answered, in a single instance, than by making choice of our apostle, who had been possessed of every advantage that can be imagined exclusive of the gospel, and, in consequence of these advantages, had made the most pertinacious efforts to suppress it: he was born a Jew, bred up under Gamaliel, a chief of the Pharisees (Phil. iii,) the sect which professed the most peculiar attachment to the law of Moses: his conduct before he became a christian was undoubtedly moral, if we understand morality in that lean and confined sense which it too frequently bears among ourselves, as signifying no more than an exemption from gross vices, together with a round of outward duties performed in a mercenary, servile spirit, to soothe conscience, and purchase the favour of God. While he was thus busied in observing the letter of the law, he tells us, he was alive,—that is, he pleased himself in his own attainments, doubted not of his ability to please God, and that his state was safe and good. Upon these principles (which act uniformly upon all who are governed by them) his heart was filled with enmity against the doctrines and people of Jesus, and his blinded conscience taught him that it was his duty to oppose them. He was a willing witness at the death of Stephen (Acts xxii. 20,) and, from a spectator, soon became a distinguished actor in the like tragedies. Such is the unavoidable gradation, in a state of nature, from bad to worse. The excess and effects of his rage are described by St. Luke in very lively colours; and he often acknowledges it in his epistles; for, though the Lord forgave him, he knew not how to forgive himself for having persecuted and wasted the church of God (Gal. i. 13; 1 Cor. xv. 9:) he made havoc of the disciples like a lion or a wolf amongst a flock of sheep,—pressing into their houses, sparing none, not even women. Thus he was filled with the hateful spirit of persecution, which is undistinguishing and unrelenting. The mischiefs he could do in Jerusalem, not being sufficient to gratify his insatiable cruelty and thirst of blood, he obtained (as has been formerly observed) a commission from the high-priest to harass the disciples at Damascus. In this journey, when he was near the city, he was suddenly struck to the ground by the voice and appearance of the Lord Jesus. From that hour a memorable change took place in his heart and views; and, having been baptized by Ananias, and received a free pardon of all his wickedness, with a commission to the apostolic office, he began to preach that faith which before he had so industriously laboured to destroy. In this new light we are now to consider him; and whatever may be reasonably expected from a sense of such a display of grace and mercy in his behalf, we shall find manifested in the subsequent course of his life. Happy are those who come the nearest to such an exemplary pattern.

I. The characteristic excellence of St. Paul, which was as the spring or source of every other grace, was the ardency of the supreme love he bore to his Lord and Saviour: it would not be easy to find many periods throughout his epistles which do not evidence the fulness of his heart in this respect: he seems delighted even with the sound of the name of Jesus, so that, regardless of the cold rules of studied composition, we find him repeating it ten times in the compass of ten successive verses, 1 Cor. i. 1—10. He was so struck with the just claim the Saviour had to every heart, that he accounted a want of love to him the highest pitch of ingratitude and wickedness, and deserving the utmost severity of wrath and ruin, 1 Cor. xvi. 22. When he was conscious that, for his unwearied application to the service of the gospel, in defiance of the many dangers and deaths which awaited him in every place, he appeared to many as one

beside himself, and transported beyond the bounds of sober reason, he thought it a sufficient apology to say, "The love of Christ constrains us" (2 Cor. v. 14;) we are content to be fools for his sake, to be despised, so he may be honoured, to be nothing in ourselves, that he may be all in all: he had such a sense of the glorious, invaluable excellence of the person of Christ, of his adorable condescension in taking the nature and curse of sinners upon himself, and his complete suitableness and sufficiency, as the wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption of his people, that he often seems at a loss for words answerable to the emotions of his heart; and when he has exhausted the powers of language, and astonished his readers with his inimitable energy, he intimates a conviction of his inability to do justice to a subject, the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of which are too great for our feeble capacities to grasp. But besides these general views, he was particularly affected with the exceeding abundant love and grace of Christ to himself, when he reflected on the circumstances in which the Lord had found him, and the great things he had done for him. That he who had before been a persecutor, a blasphemer, and injurious, should be forgiven, accepted as a child of God, intrusted with the ministry of the gospel, and appointed to everlasting salvation, was indeed an instance of wonderful grace. So it appeared to himself; and at the thought of it he often seems to forget his present subject, and breaks forth into inimitable digressions to the praise of him who had loved him, and given himself for him. Happily convinced of the tendency and efficacy of this principle in himself, he proposes it to others, instead of a thousand arguments, whenever he would inculcate the most unreserved obedience to the whole will of God, or stir up believers to a holy diligence in adorning the doctrine of their God and Saviour in all things; and his exhortations to the conscientious discharge of the various duties of relative life are generally enforced by this grand motive. In a word, at all times, and in all places, the habitual and favourite subject that employed his thoughts, his tongue, and his pen, was the love of Christ.

Supported and animated by this love, he exerted himself to the utmost in promoting the knowledge of him whom he loved, and bearing testimony to his power and grace: nothing could dishearten, or terrify, or bribe him from his duty; and this must, and will, be universally the leading principle of a faithful minister. Should a man possess the tongue of men and angels, the finest genius, and the most admired accomplishments, if he is not constrained, and directed by the love of Christ, he will either do nothing, or nothing to the purpose: he will be unable to support either the frowns or the smiles of the world; his studies and endeavours will certainly be influenced by low and selfish views: interest, or a desire of applause, may stimulate him to shine as a scholar, a critic, or a philosopher; but till the love of Christ rules in his heart, he will neither have inclination nor power to exert himself for the glory of God, or the good of souls.

II. The inseparable effect, and one of the surest evidences of love to Christ, is a love to his people. Of this likewise our apostle exhibits an instructive and affecting example; the warmth and cordiality of his love to those who loved his Lord and Master, appear in every page of his writings; he so rejoiced in their prosperity, that, to hear of it at any time, made him in a manner forget his own sorrows,* when encompassed with troubles on every side; and though in many instances, he did not meet that grateful return he had reason to expect, yet he could not be discouraged; but when he had occasion to expostulate with some upon this account, he adds, I will still gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more I love you, the less I am loved, 2 Cor. xii. 5. Of such a generous temper as this, the world, would they observe it, must acknowledge (as the magician in Egypt,) this is the finger of God; for nothing but his grace can produce a conduct so contrary to the natural inclination of man, as to persevere and increase in kindness and affection to those who persevere in requiting it with coldness and ingratitude. His epistles to the Thessalonians abound in such expressions and strains of tenderness as would doubtless be generally admired (especially by those who can read them in the original,) were they not overlooked, through the unhappy disregard which too many show to that best of books in which they are contained. When he is appealing to themselves concerning the sincerity of his conduct, and how far he had been from abusing his authority, he says, We were gentle among you, even as a nurse (or mother) cherisheth her children; who, by her tender and assiduous offices, supplies their inability to take care of themselves, 1 Thess. ii. 7, 8. It would be well if all who have aimed to derive a plenitude of power from the example of the apostle, were equally desirous to imitate him in the use of it. He then adds, So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

* 2 Cor. vii. 7, 13; see likewise Phil. ii. 28, which finely intimates his tenderness and affection. He was oppressed with sorrow upon sorrow; yet he felt more for the Philippians than for himself. He mourned over Epaphroditus, when sick for their sakes; and sent him away for their comfort when recovered: and this he did as the most effectual means to lessen his own burden, by sympathizing in that joy his friends would have in the interview, though he could not directly partake with them.

No comment can do justice to the spirit of this sentiment, or to the force of the expression in the Greek. In another passage, which is rendered in our version, 'We being taken from you,' the original term* has an emphasis which no single word in our language can answer; it imports such a state of separation as is made between a parent and a child by the death of either, when the child is left a helpless and exposed orphan, or the parent is bereaved of the staff and comfort of his age; it beautifully intimates the endearing affection which subsisted between the apostle and the persons he was writing to; and demonstrates the greatest tenderness, simplicity, and condescension. But his regard went beyond words, and was evidenced by the whole course of his actions. Nor was it confined to those who had enjoyed the benefits of his personal ministry: his heart was charged with the care and welfare of all the churches; and those who had not seen his face in the flesh, had an unceasing share in his solicitude and prayers (Col. ii. 1:) nay, so strong was his love to the churches, that it balanced his habitual desire to be with Christ; he could not determine which was most eligible, to suffer with the members upon earth (so that he might be serviceable to them,) or to reign with the Head in heaven, Phil. i. 23, 24. In the passage referred to, we see the happy centripetal and centrifugal forces which carried him on through the circle of duty, he constantly tended and gravitated to his centre of rest: but successive opportunities of usefulness and service drew him off, and made him willing to wait yet longer.

In this part of his character we are not to consider him exclusively as an apostle. All who have truly known the gospel to be the power of God unto salvation, are partakers of the same spirit, according to the measure of their faith. That person is unworthy the name of a christian, who does not feel a concern and affection for his brethren who are in the world. It must be allowed, that prejudices and misapprehensions too often prevent the Lord's people from knowing each other; but, so far as they believe a person to be a child of God through faith, they cannot but love him. This is the immutable criterion which our Lord himself has given, whereby his real disciples are to be known and acknowledged, John xiii. 35. He has not directed us to judge by their discourses, their knowledge, or even their zeal, but by the evidence they give of mutual love; and we may as easily conceive of a sun without light, or a cause without an effect, as of a person duly affected with a sense of the glory of God, and the love of Christ, and not proportionably filled with a spirit of love to all who are like minded. But especially this disposition is essential to a minister of the gospel; and the apostle assures us, that all imaginable qualifications are of no avail without it; though we could possess the powers of a prophet, or an angel, or the zeal of a martyr, if we are destitute of this love, we are, in the sight of God, but as sounding brass,† or a tinkling cymbal.

III. St. Paul's inflexible attachment to the great doctrines of the gospel is another part of his character which deserves our attention: he knew their worth, experienced their power in his own soul, and saw, that though they were unacceptable to the wisdom of the world, they bore the impress of the manifold wisdom of God. He takes notice that, in those early days, there were many who corrupted the word of God.‡ The word properly signifies to adulterate, to imitate the practice of dishonest vintners, who mix and sophisticate their liquors, so that, though the colour is preserved and the taste perhaps nearly counterfeited, the quality and properties are quite altered and depraved. But he says, We are not as they: he preached the gospel in its purity and simplicity, the sincere genuine milk§ of the word, neither weakened by water, nor disguised by any artful sweetening to render it more palatable: he added nothing of his own, nor employed any art or gloss to palliate the truth, that it might be more acceptable to men of carnal minds; as he was not ashamed of it, neither was he afraid lest it should fall without success to the ground, if not supported and assisted by inventions of his own; he knew whose word it was, and therefore cheerfully ventured the issue with him who alone could procure it a welcome reception; and as he disdained the thought of deviating a tittle himself from the plain and full declaration of the truth, neither could he bear, no not for an hour, with those who presumed to do so, Gal. ii. 5. I doubt not but the warmth of his zeal, in this respect, has disgusted many in the present day, wherein a seeming candour and forbearance is pleaded for and extended to almost every sentiment, except the truths in which St. Paul gloried. There is little doubt but many, if they had the courage and honesty to speak out, would add St. Paul himself to the list of those whom they despise as uncharitable and hot-brained bigots; for who has offended more than he against the rules of that indifference to error, which is at present miscalled charity. The Galatians, in a short time after he left them, had ventured to admit some alteration

* Αποφρανισθεντες, 1 Thess. ii. 17.

† *Sounding brass*, without meaning, and without life. Such are the most specious gifts and performances, if unaccompanied by a spirit of love: they may perhaps be useful to others, as the sound of a bell gives notice, and brings people together, but the possessor himself is a lifeless instrument; he designs no good, and will receive no reward.

‡ Καπηλευοντες, 2 Cor. ii. 17.

§ Δολον γαλα, 1 Pet. ii. 2.

in the doctrine they had received from him; it was chiefly in one point: they had been persuaded into an undue regard for the law of Moses. This, some may think, was little more than a circumstantial: that it could not have any great or direct influence upon their moral practice; and that they might be very good men, and good christians, though, in this one thing, they could not see exactly with their teacher's eyes. But how different was the apostle's judgment! If the Galatians had returned to the practice of idolatry, or broken out iuto the most scandalous immoralities, he could hardly have expressed his surprise and grief in stronger terms; he changes his usual manner of address, and speaks to them as a senseless people (Gal. iii. 1,) under the power of some unaccountable fascination; he tells them, that, by admitting such an addition (Gal. i. 6—9,) small and inconsiderable as they might think it, they had, in effect, received another gospel, which was, however, so enervated and despoiled of efficacy, that it was, more properly speaking, become no gospel at all, utterly unworthy the least pretence to the name. Further, he denounces an anathema (the highest curse) upon any person who should dare to preach any such pretended gospel, even though, if such a thing were possible, it should be himself, or an angel from heaven; and this denunciation he immediately repeats, lest it should be thought that he spoke rather from warmth of temper than from a just sense of the importance of the case. What would some of my readers think of a man who should, at this time, express himself in terms like these? But let it be remembered, that our apostle, who was so ready with an anathema upon this occasion, and who, in another place (1 Cor. xvi. 22,) passes the same severe judgment upon any man who does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, was far from speaking thus from emotions of anger and ill-will; the disposition of his own mind, the tender concern with which he viewed the worst of sinners may be judged of from his willingness to be made an anathema himself (Rom. ix. 3,) after the manner of Christ, if, by all he could suffer, he might be a means of saving the Jews, who were his worst enemies, and from whom he had constantly received the most unjust and cruel treatment; but, when the cause of the gospel and the honour of Christ were in question, he could not, he durst not, consult with the feelings of flesh and blood: but as the minister and messenger of the Lord, he solemnly declared what must, and will be, the awful consequence of neglecting or corrupting the word of life.

Every faithful minister of the gospel is possessed of a degree of the same attention to the purity of the truth and faith once delivered to the saints; they must not deviate from their instructions, nor can they behold with indifference the specious attempts of others to mislead the unwary; they know what censures they must expect upon this account. It is sufficient for them that they can appeal to the searcher of hearts, that though, as the servants of Christ, they dare not aim to please men by speaking smooth things, yet they act from principles of benevolence and love, and would rejoice in the salvation of their greatest opposers. The world perhaps would judge more favourably of them if they knew all; if they were witnesses to the prayers and tears which they pour out for them in secret, and the emotions of mind they feel when they are constrained to declare the more awful parts of their message; but as ministers, and in their public work, they cannot avoid pointing out the danger of those who venture their souls and eternal hopes upon any other doctrine than that which St. Paul preached.

IV. But though St. Paul was so tenacious of the great foundation-truths of the gospel, and would not admit or connive at any doctrine that interfered with them, he exercised, upon all occasions, a great tenderness to weak consciences, in matters that were not essential to the faith, and when the scruples were owing rather to a want of clear light than to obstinacy. This was evident in his conduct with regard to the great controversy that soon took place between the Jewish and Gentile converts, about the distinction of meats, and drinks, and other rituals enjoined by the law of Moses; the obligation (Rom. xiv.) of which, many who had been educated in the practice of those observances, did not immediately see was superseded by the gospel of Christ: He knew and asserted his own liberty; yet, in condescension to the weakness of others, he often abridged himself of it, and declared that, rather than grieve or cause offence to a weak brother, he would eat no meat while the world stood. His practice herein will probably be of general application, *mutatis mutandis*, so long as the present state of human infirmity subsists. A defect in knowledge, the prejudices of education and custom, the remains of a legal spirit, the influence of great names, and other causes of a like nature, will probably always operate, so far as to keep up lesser differences in judgment and practice amongst those who agree in the great and fundamental truths. The enemy gains too much advantage from these things, not to improve such differences into divisions. Self is too prevalent in the best men, and the tendency of self is, to exact submission, to hurry to extremes, to exaggerate trifles into points of great consequence, and to render us averse to the healing expedients of peace. From these sources, discords and evils innumerable have been multiplied and perpetuated among the various

denominations under which the Lord's people have been ranged, which have greatly hindered the welfare and progress of the common cause, and exposed each contending party to the scorn of their real enemies. But were the spirit and conduct of our apostle more adopted, many debates would entirely cease; and in those things where a difference of judgment would still subsist, the exercise of patience, gentleness, and mutual forbearance, would perhaps afford fairer occasion for the display of the christian character, than if we were all exactly of a mind; then the strong would bear the infirmities of the weak, the one would not censure, nor the other despise; nor would those whose minds have been enlarged by a variety of experience and observation, think it at all strange, much less would they be angry, if others who have not had the same advantages cannot immediately enter into all their sentiments. St. Paul, in knowledge, abilities, and usefulness, was eminently superior to all those among whom he chiefly conversed, and, as an apostle, he had a stronger right than any man since the apostle's day could have to exact an implicit deference and submission; but he had drunk deeply of the spirit of his Master, and we are concerned to follow him, as he followed Christ, in the exercise of tenderness to the weakest of the flock.

It is not my present business to define what are properly essentials in the christian religion, and to separate them clearly from the less important points, which, for that reason, and in contradistinction to the other, are called circumstantials. This would lead me too far, though perhaps it would not be so difficult as a person might at first expect, who should be told of all that has been written (with little satisfaction) upon the subject. I foresee a future period in our history, when a disquisition of this kind will be almost necessary; and if I am spared to reach so far, I shall probably embrace the occasion. In the mean time I would just hint an observation or two upon this head, which the intelligent reader (if he thinks them just) may apply as he sees proper.

1. Circumstantials and essentials in religion (if we speak with propriety) are derived from the same source, and resolved into the same authority. To consider the commands of God as essentials, and the inventions and traditions of men superadded thereto as circumstantials, would be a very improper, and indeed a very false division of the subject. Nothing but what is prescribed by the word of God, or may be fairly deduced from it, is worthy the name even of circumstantial in true religion. Human appointments, if not repugnant to scripture and the light of conscience, may be submitted to for the sake of peace, or when the general purpose of edification cannot be attained without them; but they seem not to deserve a place even among the circumstantials of a religion which is of divine institution. All the laboured arguments, whether for or against the colour of a garment, the shape of a building, and a multitude of other things equally insignificant, seem to have occasioned a needless loss of time and temper, chiefly by a mistake of the question on both sides.

2. Essentials in christianity are those things without which no man can be a christian in the sight of God, and by the decision of his word; and, on the other hand, those things only are essential which whoever possesses, is by scripture-declaration, in a state of favour with God through Christ. These might be branched out into many particulars; but they are fully and surely comprised in two, Faith and Holiness. These are essential to the being of a Christian, are only to be found in a christian, are infallible tokens that the possessor is accepted in the Beloved, and whoever dies without them must assuredly perish: These are essentials, because they are absolutely necessary; for it is written, "He that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark xvi. 16,) and "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. xii. 14:) and they are essential likewise, because they demonstrate an interest in the promise of everlasting life. Thus our Lord declares, "He that heareth my words, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life" (John v. 24;) and the apostle, writing to the believing Romans, tells them, "Now, being made free from sin, and become the servants of God, you have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life," Rom. vi. 22. These then are the essentials of religion: and though they are produced by the same power of the Holy Spirit, and derived from a knowledge of the same truths, and therefore cannot be separated, they may properly be distinguished for the conviction of those who pretend to one without the other. The most specious appearances of holiness, which are not accompanied with faith in Christ, may be safely rejected as counterfeits. On the other hand, a profession of faith which is not evidenced by the fruits of holiness, by gracious tempers, and a tenor of life becoming the gospel, is dead, delusory, and destructive.

If the question is removed another step, and it should be asked, Which, or how many, of the doctrines of scripture are necessary to produce the faith and holiness supposed requisite? it may suffice to say, That, in the nature of things, no person can be expected to believe in Christ, till convinced of his need of him, and of his ability, as a Saviour, fully to answer his expectations: and as a supreme love to God, and a hatred of all sin, are evidently included in the idea of holiness,

it supposes a disposition of mind, which every man's experience proves to be beyond the power of fallen nature; and therefore a competent knowledge and cordial acceptance of what the scriptures teach concerning the nature and desert of sin, the person and mediatory acts of Christ, the causes, ends, and effects of his mediation, together with the necessity of that change of heart which is expressed by a being born again, appear to be essentially necessary to that faith and holiness which are described in the gospel.

3. The circumstantials of religion include all those particulars of revelation, which a person possessed of the above-mentioned essentials may as yet be unacquainted with, or unable to judge of with certainty. A careful application to the scriptures, a diligent waiting upon God in prayer, and an improvement of the means of grace, will (by the divine blessing, which is promised to those who seek in this manner) increase our light, comprehension, and certainty, with regard to these points, which though not essentially necessary to the being of a Christian, are exceedingly conducive to his well-being, to his growth and establishment in the truth.

This subject may be perhaps illustrated from the animal frame, in which what we call the vital parts may be considered as essential to life, because there can be no life without them. We may easily conceive, that a man may live without an arm or leg, or several members and organs, which, though highly valuable for use and comfort, are not necessarily connected with life; but if we conceive of him as deprived of his head, heart, or lungs, we can no longer consider him as living; yet it is desirable to have a body not only animated, but organized. So likewise in religion, those who are truly partakers of it will not too curiously inquire, how much knowledge, or what degree of practice is barely consistent with a possibility of life, but they will earnestly desire to be acquainted with the whole will of God, and that every part of it may have a suitable influence upon their practice: But, in the mean time, a consolation is provided, in the promises of God, made to those who have received the seeds of faith and true holiness, against the fears, doubts, and involuntary mistakes, which, from remaining ignorance, they are yet subject to: He will supply what is wanting, pardon what is amiss, and lead them on from strength to strength; they are to walk by the light already afforded, to wait on him for an increase, to be diffident of themselves, and gentle to others, and things which as yet they know not, God will, in his due time, reveal to them. But to return from this digression:

V. Every part of St. Paul's history and writings demonstrates a disinterested spirit, and that his uncommon labours were directed to no other ends than the glory of God and the good of men. No man had probably so great an influence over his hearers, or could have a juster claim, from the nature and number of his services, to a suitable provision for himself; but he could say with truth, We seek not yours, but you. To cut off all occasions of misapprehension on this head, he usually submitted to work with his own hands, rather than be chargeable to his friends.* It is true, he does not propose himself to us a pattern in this respect; for he tells us (1 Cor. ix. 14,) that the labourer is worthy of his hire; and that the Lord had ordained, that those who preach the gospel should live by the gospel; and when he saw it expedient, he did not refuse to be himself assisted by others. He showed, by accepting such assistance from some, that he understood his liberty, and did not act from a spirit of pride or singularity when he declined it; and, by his more general practice, he evidenced that he was superior to all selfish and mercenary motives, and, upon the whole, he was content to appear and live as a poor man; and though he had learned, in the school of Christ, how to abound as well as to suffer want, the latter seems to have been more frequently his lot (Phil. iv. 12:) he saw too many false teachers, who, under the sanction of a sacred character, made merchandize of souls; and he not only severally censured them, but, by this self-denial, which they were unable to imitate, he manifested the vanity of their pretences in setting themselves forth as the apostles of Christ. This seems to have been the chief design in it, and the reason of his repeating, with so much earnestness, his determination to take nothing from the Corinthians, who were too much inclined to listen to some of these teachers, to his disadvantage. But whatever parade they might make of gifts or zeal, or however they might presume to equal themselves to him in other respects, he knew they would not attempt to share with him in the glory of preaching the gospel freely, which was diametrically inconsistent with their whole design. The circumstances with us are so far different, that, in proposing St. Paul as a pattern of disinterestedness, we do not lay a stress upon his preaching the gospel without expense to his hearers; yet, in his noble contempt of worldly andvantages, and making every thing stoop to the great ends of his mission, he stands as a precedent to all christian ministers in succeeding times. In those

* 1 Cor. ix. 18. That I may make the gospel of Christ without charge.—Ἀδάπανον θήσω, that I may set it before you *gratis*, or a free gospel. The messengers of good news are usually gratified with a reward; but the apostle, though he brought the most welcome and important tidings that ever rejoiced the hearts of men, would not encumber or disgrace the news, by receiving any thing for it. The truth is, he took as much pleasure in delivering his message as they could in hearing it, and found his reward in his employment.

passages of his epistles to Timothy and Titus, where the negative part of a minister's character, whether bishop or deacon, is given, this is constantly one branch of it, that he must not be influenced by a love of gain; and as constantly the word is compounded with the epithet filthy: "Not given to filthy lucre;" to intimate, that nothing can be more dishonest or dishonourable than to make a traffic of this service. Nor is this the judgment of scripture only, but the general voice of mankind. Nothing is a greater bar to a minister's usefulness, or renders his person and labours more contemptible, than a known attachment to money, a gripping fist, and a hard heart. They who enter into the priest's office for a piece of bread, who are less concerned for the flock than the fleece, who employ all their arts and influence to exchange a less emolument for a greater, or to superadd one to another, may have the reward they seek. But of all the methods of acquiring wealth, which do not directly expose a man to the lash of human laws, this is the most to be lamented and avoided. If the scriptures are true, if St. Paul was a servant of Christ, and if the authority of his precepts and example is still binding, a day will come when mercenary preachers will wish they had begged their bread from door to door, or been chained to the oar of a galley for life, rather than have presumed to intrude into the church upon such base and unworthy views. It is to be feared, that too many read the awful denunciations upon this head in the prophets Jeremiah (chap. xxiii.) and Ezekiel (chap. xiii. and xxxiv,) with indifference, as supposing they only relate to the Jews who lived at that time; but they are equally applicable to all who prostitute the word and worship of God to the purposes of ambition and avarice.

VI. From the foregoing particulars we may collect the idea of true christian zeal, as exemplified in our apostle. Hardly any word in our language is more misunderstood, or abused than zeal.* It is used in the New Testament indifferently in a good or bad sense; and it is considered as a vice or virtue, according to its object and principle. It sometimes denotes envy,† indignation, or disdain, an obstinate and ignorant opposition to the truth, a misguided warmth in unnecessary things, and a contentious, disputatious temper. A zeal replete with these characters has too frequently been the bane and opprobrium of the christian church; but it is good to be zealously affected in a good thing; and then it is sinful to be otherwise. Our passions were not given us in vain. When the judgment is well informed, and the understanding duly enlightened by the word of God, the more warmth the better; but this earnestness in an ignorant or prejudiced person is dangerous, and hurtful to himself and others; it is like haste in a man in the dark, who knows not where he is going, nor what mischiefs he may suffer or occasion. False zeal spends its strength in defence of names and forms, the externals of religion, or the inventions of men; it enforces its edicts by compulsion and severity; it would willingly call for fire from heaven, but, unable to do this, it kindles the flame of persecution, and, if not providentially restrained, wages war with the peace, comfort, and liberty of all who disdain to wear its chains, and breathes threatening, slaughter and destruction with an unrelenting spirit. Its mildest weapons (which it never employs alone, except where it is checked by a superior power) are calumny, contempt and hatred; and the objects it seeks to worry are generally the quiet in the land, and those who worship God in spirit and in truth: in a word, it resembles the craft by which it works, and is earthly, sensual, devilish. But the true christian zeal is a heavenly, gentle flame: it shines and warms, but knows not to destroy: it is the spirit of Christ, infused, with a sense of his love, into the heart: it is a generous philanthropy and benevolence, which, like the light of the sun, diffuses itself to every object, and longs to be the instrument of good, if possible, to the whole race of mankind. A sense of the worth of souls, the importance of unseen things, and the awful condition of unawakened sinners, makes it indeed earnest and importunate, but this it shows not by bitterness and constraint, but by an unwearied perseverance in attempting to overcome‡ evil with good: it returns blessings for curses, prayers for ill treatment; and, though often reviled and affronted, cannot be discouraged from renewed efforts to make others partakers of the happiness itself possesses: it knows how to express a becoming indignation against the errors and follies of men; but towards their persons it is all

* All religious parties profess a great regard to the precept, Jude 3. "Contend earnestly for the faith." And if noisy anger, bold assertions, harsh censures, and bitter persecuting zeal can singly or jointly answer the apostle's design, there is hardly a party but may glory in their obedience. But if the weapons of our warfare are not carnal;—if the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God;—if the true Christian contention can only be maintained by scripture arguments, meekness, patience, prayer, and an exemplary conversation;—if this is the true state of the case, where is the church or party (may I not say, where is the person?) that has not still much to learn and to practise on this point?

† Compare Acts v. 17; Rom. xiii. 13, x. 2; Phil. iii. 6; Gal. i. 14; Acts xvi. 20; James iii. 16; in all which places the word is the same that is rendered zeal in 2 Cor. ix. 2; Col. iv. 13; John ii. 17.

‡ See Romans xxii. 20, 21. This practice the apostle recommends by the metaphor of heaping coals of fire on an enemy's head. As metals that endure a moderate warmth without alteration are melted down and quite dissolved by an intense heat, so the hard heart, even of an enemy, may be sometimes softened by a series, and indefatigable heaping up of favours and obligations. This is a noble piece of chemistry, but almost as much out of repute and practice as the search after the philosopher's stone.

gentleness and compassion:* it weeps (and would, if possible, weep tears of blood) over those who will not be persuaded; but, while it plainly represents the consequences of their obstinacy, it trembles at its own declarations,† and feels for them who cannot feel for themselves, it is often grieved, but cannot be provoked. The zealous christian is strictly observant of his own failings, candid and tender to the faults of others: he knows what allowances are due to the frailty of human nature, and the temptations of the present state, and willingly makes all the allowances possible; and though he dare not call evil good, cannot but judge according to the rule of the scripture, yet he will conceal the infirmities of men as much as he can, will not speak of them without just cause, much less will he aggravate the case, or boast himself over them. Such was the zeal of our apostle. Bold and intrepid in the cause of God and truth, unwearied in service, inflexible in danger, when duty called, he was not to be restrained, either by the threats of enemies, the solicitations of friends, or the prospect of any hardships to which he might be exposed: he cheerfully endured hunger and thirst, watching and weariness, poverty and contempt, and counted not his life dear, so that he might fulfil the great purposes of the ministry which he had received of the Lord. But at the same time, in all his intercourse with men, he was gentle, mild, and compassionate; he studied the peace, and accommodated himself to the weakness of all about him: when he might command, he used entreaties; when he met with hard and injurious treatment, he bore it patiently, and, if opportunity offered, requited it with kindness. Thus as he had drunk of the spirit, so he walked in the steps of his Lord and Master.

All who bear the name of ministers of Christ would do well to examine how far their tempers and conduct are conformable to St. Paul's. Are there not too many who widely differ from him? Where he was immoveable as an iron pillar, they are flexible and yielding as a reed waving in the wind, suiting their doctrines and practice to the depraved state of the world, and prostituting their talents and calling to the unworthy pursuit of ambition and applause. On the other hand, in things less essential, or not commanded, they invade the rights of private judgment, and attempt to bind heavy yokes‡ and impositions upon those whom Christ has made free; and while they readily tolerate, if not countenance, scepticism, and immorality, they exert all their strength and subtlety to disquiet or suppress those who differ from them in the slightest circumstance, if they profess to differ for conscience sake. But Jesus has no such ministers: their claim is utterly vain; none but those who are ignorant of the plainest truths can allow them this character: their tempers, their behaviour, the tenor of their professed instructions, and the total want of efficacy and influence in their ministrations, plainly demonstrate that he neither sent them nor owns them.

VII. Having considered the subject-matter, and the leading views of the apostle's ministry, it may not be improper to take some notice of his manner as a preacher. This he reminds the Corinthians of. They were reputed a polite and ingenuous people. St. Paul was aware of their character, and expresses himself as if he had been deliberating before he saw them in what way he should address them with the fairest probability of success. He tells them (1 Cor. ii. 2—4,) that he determined to know nothing among them but Jesus Christ, and him crucified, including in this one comprehensive expression, the whole scheme of gospel-doctrine. And as to the manner in which he delivered this doctrine, he says, "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and with power." We are sure that he did not renounce justness of reasoning, or propriety of expression; in these respects he exceeded their most admired orators, as may appear to any who have skill and candour to compare his epistles and discourses, in the original, with the best performances of the Greek writers; but he renounced the enticing or plausible words of man's wisdom. In the term man's wisdom, I apprehend, may be included whatever the natural faculties of man are capable of discovering or receiving, independent of the peculiar teaching of the Spirit of God, which is promised and re-

* When St. Paul, speaking of the Judaizing false teachers, and their adherents, says, "I would they were even cut off which trouble you," he seems to allude to the circumcision they so strenuously enforced, Gal. v. 12; compare Phil. iii. 2. His wish concerning these sectaries has been often perverted, to give sanction to the rage of persecutors; but he does not mean to cut them off with fire and sword, or to cut them off from fire and water, but to have them excluded from communion and converse with true believers.

† How awful to declare, to denounce the terrors of the Lord! those terrors which are represented to us by fire unquenchable, with the additional idea of eternity, Matth. iii. 13; Mark ix. 43.—As such descriptions shock and alarm a guilty conscience, there are two different methods by which the removal of this alarm is attempted: some seek and find peace and security from the blood of Jesus; and some, who are not pleased with this method, satisfy themselves and their friends with criticisms upon the terms, and tell us that the phrase "for ever and ever," signifies a limited space, and that "fire that cannot be quenched," denotes fire that goes out of itself.

‡ Matth. xviii. 4. "They bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne," a weight of traditions and observances, "and lay them upon men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." There is a double opposition in this passage, between to *be borne* and to *move*, and between the *shoulders* and a *finger*. It has been often found since, that those who are most impatient of restraint themselves are most earnest in pressing yokes and bands upon others.

strained to those who, sensible of their own foolishness, are brought to believe in Jesus Christ, the wisdom of God; and the enticing words of man's wisdom may include all those ways and arts which the wise men of the world have used or approved, as most effectual to express, adorn,* or defend their own wise sentiments and discoveries. These, and the methods of setting them off to advantage, have been divided into many branches, and dignified with sounding names; but all the efforts of man's wisdom, considered as engaged in the subjects of religion and morals, may be summed up in three particulars: 1. A vain inquiry into things which lie wholly beyond the capacity of man in his present state, and which can only be discovered by supernatural revelation; 2. A vain attempt to account for every thing according to the light and principles of depraved reason; 3. A studious exactness in language, either an easy flow of words to please and amuse the ear, or a torrent of strong and figurative expressions to engage the passions, according as a different taste or fashion happens to prevail. It would be too dry a task to illustrate these points by adducing specimens of each from the works of the ancient and modern philosophers; but if we had not other employment in hand, it would be easy to show that man's wisdom, in the first sense, is uncertainty, in the second, prejudice, in the third, imposition and artifice. It is sufficient for my present purpose that the apostle renounced them all. Instead of vain† conjectures, he spoke from certain experience; he could say, I received of the Lord that which I also delivered to you. Instead of accommodating his doctrine to the taste and judgment of his hearers, he spoke with authority, in the name of God whom he served: instead of losing time in measuring words and syllables, that he might obtain the character of a fine speaker, he spoke, from the feeling and fulness of his heart, the words of simplicity and truth. The success of his preaching did not at all depend upon the softness and harmony of his periods, and therefore he disdained an attention to those petty ornaments of speech, which were quite necessary to help out the poverty of man's wisdom; he sought something else, which those who preach themselves rather than Christ Jesus the Lord, have little reason to expect;‡ I mean the power and demonstration of the Spirit: he knew that this alone could give him success; and ministers may learn from him what to avoid, and what to seek for, if they would be useful to their hearers. Men can but declare the truths of the gospel; it is the Spirit of God who alone can reveal them: nothing less than a divine power can present them to the mind in their just importance, and throw light into the soul, by which they may be perceived: nothing less than this power can subdue the will, and open the heart to receive the truth in the love of it: without this concurring agency, even St. Paul would have preached in vain. From what has been said, we may remark two obvious reasons, amongst others, why we have so much unsuccessful preaching in our days, either the gospel-truths are given up, or the gospel-simplicity departed from. Where either of these is the case, the Lord refuses his power and blessing.

VIII. Another observable part of St. Paul's character, is his unaffected humility. In the midst of his eminent and extensive services, he retained a deep sense of the part he once acted against the Lord. He speaks of himself, on this account, in the most abasing language, as the chief of sinners, and strongly expresses his unworthiness of the grace and apostleship he had received, by comparing himself to an untimely birth;§ and though his insight into the mysteries of the gospel, the communion he maintained with God, by faith in his Son, and the beauty of holiness which shone in his conversation, were all beyond the common measure; yet having, in the same proportion, a clearer sense of his obligations, and of the extent and purity of the divine precepts, he thought nothing of his present attainments, in comparison of those greater degrees of grace he was still pressing

* In 1 Cor. xiv. 9. St. Paul recommends "words easy to be understood." His reasoning in that chapter is levelled, not only against the absurdity of speaking in an unknown tongue, but against the use of any terms, or the treating upon any subjects which are not adapted to the level of the auditory. Many discourses that are expressed in English phrases, are as useless to the bulk of the people as if they were delivered in Greek; for what have the people to do with scholastic or metaphysical nicetics, or curious researches into antiquity, or elegant dissertations upon the fitness of things? They cannot understand them; and if they could, they would find them nothing to their purpose.

† Though the apostle disclaimed the light sophistry which obtained in the schools, the tenor of his preaching was founded upon the clearest principles, and contained a chain of the justest consequences. He did not only assert, but prove and demonstrate the truth of his doctrines, by ancient prophecies, by recent facts, and by a present incontestible efficacy. Yet it is called "the demonstration of the Spirit," to intimate that the strongest and best adapted evidence is insufficient to the purposes of salvation unless accompanied with a divine power.

‡ A man who has languages and sciences in his head, but does not know or relish the gospel of Christ, is an ignorant, indeed a stupid person, unaffected with the grandest view of wisdom, power, and goodness that ever was or can be displayed; and whoever truly knows and embraces this mystery of godliness is a wise man, a person of an excellent understanding, though he may not be much acquainted with those uncertain, unsatisfying systems which men have agreed to honour with the name of knowledge. See Ps cxi. 10.

§ 1 Cor. xv. 8. "As one born out of due time." The original word is ἐκτρώμα, that is, *an abortion*. He speaks of himself under this despicable image (the true sense of which is not easily perceived by an English reader,) to show the deep and humbling sense he retained of the part he once acted against the church of Christ; he considered himself as unworthy and contemptible to the last degree, as one of whom no good hope could be justly formed at that time, much less that he should be honoured with a sight of the Lord Jesus from heaven, and with a call to the apostolic office.

after.* While, in the eyes of others, he appeared not only exemplary, but unequalled, he esteemed himself less than the least of all saints (Ephes. iii. 9;) and his patience and condescension towards others, and his acquiescence under all the trying dispensations of providence with which he was exercised, were a proof that this was not an affected manner of expression, but the genuine dictate of his heart. To speak of one's self in abasing terms is easy; and such language is often a thin veil, through which the motions of pride may be easily discerned: but though the language of humility may be counterfeited, its real fruits and actings are inimitable. Here again he is a pattern for christians. An humble frame of mind is the strength and ornament of every other grace, and the proper soil wherein they grow. A proud christian, that is, one who has a high conceit of his own abilities and attainments, is no less a contradiction than a sober drunkard, or a generous miser. All other seeming excellencies are of no real value, unless accompanied with this; and though a person should appear to have little more than a consciousness of his own insufficiency, and a teachable dependent spirit, and is waiting upon the Lord, in his appointed way, for instruction and a blessing, he will infallibly thrive, as a tree planted by the water-side; for God, who resisteth the proud, has promised to give grace to the humble, James iv. 6. But, in an especial manner, humility is necessary and beautiful in a minister; the greatest abilities, and most unwearied diligence, will not insure success without it; a secret (if allowed,) apprehension of his own importance, will deprive him of that assistance without which he can do nothing; his arm will be dried up, and his right eye will be darkened (Zech. xi. 17:) for the Lord of hosts hath purposed to stain the pride of all human glory, and will honour none but those who abase themselves, and are willing to give all the praise to him alone. If any man hath ground to set a value upon his knowledge, gifts, and services, St. Paul might justly claim the pre-eminence: but though he was an apostle, and an inspired writer; though he had planted churches through a considerable part of the known world; though he was received as an angel by many to whom he preached, and, by a peculiar favour, had been caught up into the third heaven; yet he was, by grace, preserved from being exalted above measure, or from assuming an undue superiority over his brethren. The authority with which he was entrusted he employed solely to their advantage, and accounted himself the least of all, and the servant of all. How very opposite has been the conduct of many since his time, who have aimed to appropriate the name of ministers of Christ exclusively to themselves.

Such was our apostle; and the same spirit (though in an inferior degree,) will be found in all the faithful ministers of the Lord Jesus: they love his name; it is the pleasing theme of their ministry; and to render it glorious in the eyes of sinners is the great study of their lives; for his sake they love all who love him; and are their willing servants to promote the comfort and edification of their souls: They love his gospel, faithfully proclaim it without disguise or alteration, and shun not to declare the whole counsel of God, so far as they are themselves acquainted with it: they contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, and are desirous to preserve and maintain the truth in its power and purity. The knowledge of their own weakness and fallibility makes them tender to the weakness of others; and though they dare not lay, or allow, any other foundation than that which God has laid in Zion, yet, knowing that the kingdom of God does not consist in meats and drinks, but in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, they guard against the influence of a party-spirit; and, if their labours are confined to christians of one denomination, their love and prayers are not limited within such narrow bounds, but extend to all who love and serve their Master: they have entered upon the ministry, not for low and sordid ends, for popular applause or filthy lucre, but from a constraining sense of the love of Jesus, and a just regard to the worth and danger of immortal souls: their zeal is conducted and modelled by the example and precepts of their Lord; their desire is not to destroy, but to save, and they wish their greatest enemies a participation in their choicest blessings. In the subject-matter and manner of their preaching, they show that they seek not to be men-pleasers, but to commend the truth to every man's conscience in the sight of God; and when they have done their utmost, and when God has blessed their labours, and given them acceptance and success beyond their hopes, they are conscious of the defects and evils attending their best endeavours, of the weak influence the truths they preach to others have upon their own hearts, that their sufficiency of every kind is of God, and not of themselves; and therefore they sit down ashamed, as unprofitable servants, and can rejoice or glory in nothing, but in him who came into the world to save the chief of sinners.

It might be expected that a spirit and conduct, thus uniformly benevolent and disinterested and witnessed to, in a greater or less degree, by the good effect of their ministry and example amongst their hearers, would

* Phil. iii. 13. "Forgetting the things that are behind." As a traveller upon urgent business posts from place to place, forgets the distance and inconveniences behind him, and has all his thoughts taken up with the place he would be at, and the remainder of the road that leads to it.

secure them the good-will of mankind, and entitle them to peace, if not to respect. But, on the contrary, these are the very people who are represented as deceivers of souls, and disturbers of society: they are not permitted to live in some places; and it is owing to a concurrence of favourable circumstances, if they are permitted to speak in any: The eyes of many are upon them, watching for their halting; their infirmities are aggravated, their expressions wrested, their endeavours counteracted, and their persons despised. The design of our history is, to show, in the course of every period of the church, that those who have approached nearest to the character I have attempted to delineate from St. Paul,* have always met with such treatment; and from his declaration, that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (2 Tim. iii. 12,) we may expect it will always be so, while human nature and the state of the world remain as they are. However, it may be a consolation to those who suffer for righteousness sake, to reflect, that the apostles were treated thus before them, particularly St. Paul, who, as he laboured, so he suffered more abundantly than the rest; his person was treated with contempt and despite, his character traduced, his doctrine misrepresented; and though his natural and acquired abilities were great, and he spoke with power and the demonstration of the Spirit, yet he was esteemed the filth and off-scouring of all things, a babbler, and a madman,† Acts xvii. 18.

CHAPTER III.

Of the irregularities and offences which appeared in the apostolic churches.

THERE are few things in which the various divisions of professing christians are so generally agreed, as in speaking highly and honourably of primitive christianity. In many persons this is no more than an ignorant admiration, not capable of distinguishing what is truly praise-worthy, but disposed to applaud every thing in the gross that has the sanction of antiquity to recommend it. The primitive christians have been looked upon, by some, as if they were not men of the same nature and infirmities with ourselves, but nearly infallible and perfect. This is often taken for granted in general; and when particulars are insisted on, it is observable that they are seldom taken from the records of the New Testament, and the churches which flourished in the apostles' times; but rather from those who lived in and after the second century, when a considerable deviation in doctrine, spirit, and conduct, from those which were indeed the primitive churches, had already taken place, and there were evident appearances of that curiosity, ambition, and will-worship, which increased by a swift progress, till at length professed christianity degenerated into little more than an empty name.

If christians of the early ages are supposed to have been more exemplary than in after periods, chiefly because they lived nearer to the times of our Lord and his apostles, it will follow of course, that the earlier the better. We may then expect to find most of the christian spirit among those who were converted and edified by the apostles' personal ministry: and though we cannot allow the assumption, (for the power of godliness depends not upon dates, periods, or instruments, but upon the influences of the Holy Spirit,) yet we are content to join issue upon the conclusion, and are willing that all claims to a revival of religion, and a real reformation of manners, shall be admitted or rejected, as they accord or disagree with the accounts we have of the churches planted by the apostles, and during the time that these authorised ministers of Christ presided over them. We can find no other period in which we can, to so much advantage, propose the visible churches of Christ as a pattern and specimen of what his grace and gospel may be expected to produce in the present state of human nature; for the apostles were furnished, in an extraordinary manner, with zeal, wisdom, and authority for their work, and God was remarkably present with them, by the power of his Spirit. Besides, as all the information we have concerning this period is derived from the inspired writings, we have that certainty of facts to ground our observations upon which no other history can afford.

We have a pleasing description of the first of these churches, which was formed at Jerusalem soon after our Lord's ascension.

* Our Lord's declaration, "Behold, I send you forth as lambs in the midst of wolves," is applicable to all his servants. The sight of a lamb is sufficient to provoke the rage and appetite of a wolf: Thus the spirit of the gospel awakens the rage and opposition of the world; they have an antipathy to it, and owe it a grudge wherever they see it.

† 2 Cor. v. 13. See likewise Mark iii. 21. "And when his friends heard it, they went out to lay hold of him, for they said, He is beside himself:" That is to say, his attention to the office he has undertaken has transported him beyond the bounds of reason, and made him forget his station, his friends, and his safety; therefore, out of pure affection and prudence, they would have confined him: Nor is it any wonder that our Lord's friends and relatives should thus think and speak of him, since we are assured that even his brethren did not believe on him, John vii. 3. And there seems to have been no possible medium. All who were conversant with him, must either receive him as the Messiah, or pity, if not despise him as a madman. This was the mildest judgment they could form; the Pharisees indeed went farther, and pronounced him an impostor and a devil. Such was the treatment our Lord and Master found. Let not, then, his disciples and servants be surprised or grieved that they are misrepresented and misunderstood, on account of their attachment to him; but let them comfort themselves with his gracious words, John xv. 18—21.

On the day of Pentecost, many who had personally consented to the death of Jesus, received power to believe in his name, and publicly joined themselves to his disciples; a sense of his love and grace to each united the whole body so closely together, that, though they were a multitude of several thousands, it is said (Acts iv. 32,) they were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them, that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common; and they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. These were happy times indeed! No interfering interests or jarring sentiments, no subtle or factious spirits, no remissness in the means of grace, no instances of a conduct in any respect unbecoming the gospel, were to be found among them; it seemed as if the powerful sense of divine truths, which they had received, had overborne, if not extirpated, every evil disposition in so large an assembly; yet, even this (the difference of numbers excepted,) is no peculiar case. The like has been observable again and again, when God has been pleased to honour ministers, far inferior to the apostles, with a sudden and signal influence, in places where the power of the gospel had been little known before. In such circumstances, the truth has been often impressed and received with astonishing effects; many, who before were dead in trespasses and sins, having been, like those of old, pierced to the heart, and then filled with comfort, from a believing knowledge of him on whom their sins were laid, find themselves, as it were, in a new world; old things are past away; the objects of time and sense appear hardly worth their notice: the love of Christ constrains them, and they burn in love to all who will join them in praising the Saviour. Here indeed is a striking change wrought: yet the infirmities inseparable from human nature, though for the present overpowered, will, as occasions arise, discover themselves again, so far as to prove two things universally: 1. That the best of men are still liable to mistakes and weaknesses, for which they will have cause to mourn to the end of their lives. 2. That in the best times there will be some intruders, who for a season may make a profession, and yet in the end appear to have neither part nor lot in the matter. Thus it was in the church of Jerusalem: the pleasing state of things mentioned above did not continue very long; an Ananias and a Sapphira were soon found amongst them, who sought the praise of men, and made their profession a cloak for covetousness and hypocrisy (Acts v;) grudgings and murmurings arose in a little time between the Jews and the Hellenists (Acts vi;) and it was not long before they were thrown into strong debates, and in danger of divisions, upon account of the question first started at Antioch, Whether the law of Moses was still in force to believers or not? Acts xv.

In these latter times, when it has been attempted to vindicate and illustrate a revival of religion, by appealing to the writings of St. Paul, and the delineation he has given us of the faith and practice of a christian, the attempt has often excited disdain: it has been thought a sufficient answer, to enumerate and exaggerate the faults, mistakes, and inconsistencies (or what the world is pleased to account such,) that are charged upon the persons concerned in such an appeal, as necessarily proving, that where these blemishes are found, there can be no resemblance to the first christians. If the frequency did not lessen the wonder, it might seem very unaccountable that any person who has read the New Testament should venture upon this method in a Protestant country, where the people have the scriptures in their hands, and are at liberty to judge for themselves. But as there are not a few, even among Protestants, who seem to expect their assertions will pass for proofs, I propose, in this chapter, to point out several things, which, though undoubtedly wrong, had a considerable prevalence among the first christians, leaving the application to the judicious reader. I acknowledge my firm persuasion, that a certain system of doctrine, revived of late years, is the doctrine of the Reformation, and of the New Testament; which, though not suited to the general and prevailing taste, is attended, more or less, with the blessing and power of God, in turning sinners from darkness to light: I confess, that both ministers and people who espouse this despised cause, have sufficient ground for humiliation: we have seen, we still see, many things amongst us which we cannot approve; we fear that too many are a real discredit to the cause they profess; and we are conscious, that the best of us fall mournfully short of what might be expected from the sublime principles which, by the grace of God, we have been taught from his word: we desire to be open to conviction, not to contend for errors, or even to vindicate any thing that can be proved contrary to the scripture; but if some things not justifiable, which we must own have accompanied what we verily believe to be a work of the Spirit of God, are (as some would represent them,) sufficient to discredit this work, to impeach the truth of the doctrines, or the sincerity of the instruments in the gross; then we are sure it will follow upon the same principles, that the Jews and Heathens had just ground and warrant to reject the doctrine of the apostles, and to treat their persons with contempt.

A competent knowledge and consideration of the present state of man, in himself, and of the circumstances in which he is placed,

are necessary to preserve us from being offended with the gospel of Christ, on account of the imperfections that may be found in the conduct of those who have sincerely received it; due allowances must be made for the remains of ignorance and prejudice, the power of habit, temper, and constitution, in different persons. The various combinations of these, and other particulars, make each individual character, though agreeing in one common nature, and influenced by the same general principles, in some respects an original. The power and subtlety of Satan, and his address in suiting his temptations to the peculiar inclinations and situation of every person, must be taken into the account: and likewise the immense variety of occasions arising from without, such as, the provocations and arts of enemies, the influence of mistaken friends, the necessary engagements, connexions, and relations of common life, the artifices of seducers, and the scandals of false professors. These things, and others which might be named, concur to make the path of duty exceeding difficult, especially to young beginners, who, so soon as they become sincerely desirous to serve the Lord, find themselves immediately in the midst of scenes, in which they can only be fitted to act their parts aright by a gradual and painful experience. They, whose intentions are right, usually set out with warm hearts and sanguine expectations, little aware of the difficulties that are before them: they have indeed a sure rule to act by in the scriptures, and they have a sure promise, that the Spirit of God will be their guide and teacher; but at first they have but little acquaintance with the scriptures, and until they are humbled, by being left to commit many mortifying mistakes, they are too prone to lean to their own understandings; every day brings them into some new difficulty, wherein they can get little direction from what they have passed through before, and often emergencies are so pressing as hardly to leave room for deliberation: in short, it seems to be the Lord's pleasure, not so much to preserve them from mistakes and indiscretions at first, as to take occasion to humble them upon this account, and to show them how to correct them when made. Thus they are more confirmed in a sense of their own weakness, and of his goodness, and are trained up, by time, observation, and repeated trials, to a more perfect exercise of every branch of christian wisdom; by degrees their judgments are formed to greater maturity; they are more jealous of themselves, more acquainted with Satan's devices, more capable of distinguishing the spirit and conduct of mankind, and especially more simply dependent upon God for his teaching and direction; and thus they grow into a participation of the spirit of the gospel, and are enabled to act and speak as becomes the servants of Christ. When his gospel is faithfully preached and cordially received, there always will be some who are able, by the grace of God, to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, and to demean themselves so, that if any will speak evil of them, the shame is retorted upon themselves; but among the numbers who are forming in the same school, there will likewise be some (for the reasons I have suggested) whose conduct will, in some respects, be liable to censure, though their hearts are sincere; and there will frequently be others, who (like the hearers compared by our Lord to seed sown upon rocky ground) will thrust themselves amongst professors, be called by the same name, and accounted by the world the same people, who at length discover themselves to be mere hypocrites: these indeed will furnish occasion enough for exception; and they who are glad to have it so, will readily suppose or pretend that they are all alike. It remains to show, that in this sense there is no new thing under the sun. It was so from the beginning.

The apostle Paul bears an honourable testimony to the sincerity, zeal, and grace of the believers amongst whom he had preached, and to whom he had written; he commends their work of faith and labour of love; he styles them his joy, his glory, and his crown, and expresses his confidence, that the Lord, who had begun a good work in them, would assuredly complete it: but though he knew there were many persons among them who were well established in the truth, and judicious in their conduct, his admonitions upon several occasions show there were others, whose judgments were weak and their behaviour unwarrantable.

He speaks of the Corinthians (2 Cor. i. 5,) as a people enriched in the knowledge of Christ, and honoured with the eminency of gifts; yet he takes notice of many things blameable in them; insomuch that if the people who now censure appearances of a religious kind, because they are not wholly free from imperfection, could have had opportunity to judge of the christians at Corinth in the same spirit, it is probable they would have despised and condemned those whom the apostle loved, as much as they can possibly do any set of people now.

They had first received the gospel from St. Paul, but it had been confirmed to them afterwards by other ministers. The servants of Christ all preach the same truths; but the Holy Spirit, who furnishes them all for the work he appoints them to, distributes to each one severally, according to his own will; he communicates a diversity of gifts, not all to one person, but each has a talent given him to profit withal; one is favoured with a peculiar insight into the mysteries of the gospel; another has a power and pathos of expres-

sion; and another is happy in a facility of applying to distressed and wounded consciences. It is the duty and privilege of christians to avail themselves of these different talents; to profit by each, to be thankful for all, and to esteem every faithful minister very highly for his work's sake. But the Corinthians were unduly influenced by personal attachments, as their several inclinations led them; they formed imprudent comparisons and preferences, were divided into parties, and drawn into contentions upon this account; one saying I am of Paul; another, I am of Apollos, or, I of Cephas (1 Cor. i. 12; and iii. 4:) they thought it a mark of zeal to be strenuous for their respective favourites; but St. Paul assured them, that it was a sign they were weak and low in the christian life, and a means to keep them so. Disputes and prepossessions of this kind draw the mind away from its proper nourishment, and afford occasion for the various workings of our selfish passions. Wherever the Lord is pleased to raise up, in or near the same place, ministers who are of eminence in their different gifts, the effects of this spirit will be more or less observable; and it is eagerly observed by the world, and amplified to the utmost, as a weighty objection: the ministers are represented to be artful, designing men; who, under the sacred names of Christ, and the gospel, are aiming chiefly or solely to form a party of dependants upon themselves; and the people are accounted silly sheep, carried away captive by the influence of their popular leaders, insomuch that they cannot, or dare not, receive the doctrines they profess to love from any but their own favourites. The disposition is certainly wrong; but let it be censured with candour, not as the peculiarity of this or that party, but as a fault which human nature is always prone to in similar circumstances: it showed a want of solid judgment in the Corinthians, but was no impeachment of their sincerity: much less did it prove that Paul, Apollos, or Cephas were mercenary, ambitious men, who prostituted their talents and influence to gain disciples to themselves, rather than to Christ. The same premises will admit of no stronger conclusion now than in the apostles' days.

The proper design and tendency of the religion of Jesus is, to wean the affections from the world, to mortify the dictates of self-love, and to teach us (by his example) to be gentle, forbearing, benevolent, and disinterested. This the world is aware of; and though they declare their dislike to the principles which alone can produce such a spirit, they always expect it from the people who profess them; and therefore when, amongst the numbers of these, they can find a few instances of persons too much actuated by selfish, worldly or angry tempers, it is eagerly objected: These are excellent people, if you would judge of them by the length and frequency of their devotions, and by what they have to say of their persuasion of God's love to them; but touch them in their property, and they show themselves as unwilling to forego, and as anxious to grasp, the good things of this world, as if they had no better claim to heaven than ourselves. It is much to be lamented, that such occasions of reproach are afforded to those who seek them. But what would they have said of the Corinthians, whom the apostle reproves in the following terms: "Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because you go to law one with another; why do you not rather take wrong? why do you not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, you do wrong and defraud, and that your brethren," 1 Cor. vi. 7, 8. And, in the preceding chapter, he speaks of an enormity among them, hardly to be heard of among the Heathens, which, though the fault of one person, brought dishonour upon them all, because they had not explicitly disowned it, and proceeded against the offender. This is not to be wondered at; for we have often seen, in our own time, that though evil practices have been censured in the strongest terms of disallowance, and the offenders publicly and notoriously disclaimed, yet many will still be so destitute of candour and equity as to insist on it, they are all alike.

The irregularities in the public worship at Corinth were such, as if practised amongst ourselves, would excite a greater clamour than any thing of that nature which has been hitherto complained of. It appears that, far from conducting their assemblies with decency and order, they were sometimes in the greatest confusion: different persons had a psalm, a doctrine, a tongue, a revelation, an interpretation, many speaking together, and sometimes in different languages; so that the apostle thought it very probable, that, if an unbeliever came in amongst them, he would of course say, they were mad, 1 Cor. xiv. 23. And this want of decorum extended to their celebration of the Lord's supper; where, says the apostle, Every one taketh before another; and one is hungry, and another is drunken, 1 Cor. xi. 21. I apprehend that these instances of disorder cannot be paralleled by the most irregular proceedings in our time, amongst any people that hold the principles which I am at present engaged to vindicate.

Many of the Corinthians, as well as the Galatians,* had discovered great unsteadiness towards St. Paul, and had been subdued by

* Yet he says of the Galatians, that when he first went among them, they received him as an angel of God, and, if possible, would have plucked out their own eyes to have given them to him. Gal. iv. 15. Great is the power of the gospel; it subdues and possesses the heart, and conciliates a tenderness and relation between ministers and people, nearer and dearer than the ties of flesh and blood. But alas! how great likewise is the inconstancy of mortals! the apostle experienced it to his grief; and where he had the greatest prospect, he was most disap-

false teachers and pretended apostles. Inexperienced minds are very liable to such deceptions: meaning well themselves, they are too apt to listen to the fair words and fine speeches of those who lie in wait to deceive. The love of Christ, and the love of holiness, are the leading properties of a gracious heart, and such a one, till experience has made him wise, conceives a good opinion of all who profess a regard for Jesus, or for sanctification: he is not aware, at first, that there are those in the world who attempt to divide what God has joined together. When the blood and righteousness of Christ are recommended, not as the source, but as a substitute for vital experimental religion: or when some other spirit is preached than that whose office it is to testify of Jesus; in either case the food of the soul is poisoned, and the evil begins to operate before it is perceived. Faithful ministers are accounted too low or too high, too strict or too remiss, according to the scheme newly adapted; they are first disregarded, and at length considered as enemies, because they persist in the truth, and refuse to suit themselves to the new taste of their hearers. Thus error, once admitted, makes an alarming progress: and no power but that of God can stop it. Hence proceed divisions, subdivisions, distinctions, refinements, bitterness, strife,* envyings, and by degrees enthusiasm, in the worst sense of the word: an evil to be dreaded and guarded against no less earnestly than the beginning of a fire or a pestilence. Such trying circumstances will demonstrate who are indeed upon the right foundation; for others, having once begun, depart from the truth, grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived; and many who are built upon the rock, and therefore cannot be totally or finally drawn away, yet suffer unspeakable loss; the wood, hay, and stubble (1 Cor. iii. 10—15,) the unadvised additions they have made to the scriptural truths they once received, are burnt up in the time of temptation; they lose much of their comfort and stability, and have in a manner all to begin again. The world, that knows not the weakness of man, or the power and devices of Satan, laughs at those things, and expects to see them issue in universal confusion, like that of Babel. In the same light, it is most probable, the Heathens beheld and derided the primitive christians: for they likewise had their shaking and shifting times; many amongst them, who seemed to begin in the spirit, were stopped short in their course by the arts of false teachers, to their great hinderance, and some to their final overthrow.

St. Paul addresses no one church in terms of greater tenderness and approbation than the Thessalonians; he commends their work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus; and mentions them as a pattern to the other churches in Macedonia and Greece. Yet even among these he understood there were some who walked disorderly, and were busybodies, not working at all; he strongly disapproved their conduct, declaring, that if any would not work, neither should he eat, 2 Thess. iii. 10, 11. When persons are newly awakened to a concern for their souls, and deeply impressed with the importance of eternity, it is no wonder (considering the animal frame) if their attention is so engaged and engrossed for a season, that they cannot attend to the affairs of common life with their usual alacrity and freedom:† if their concern is of a right kind, they are gradually brought to peace and hope in believing; they recover their spirits, and their civil callings being now sanctified by a desire to glorify God in them, their diligence is not less, but frequently greater than before; for now they act not to please men, or to please themselves, but what they do, they do heartily as to the Lord. However, amongst a number of people, natural temper, indiscretion, or inadvertance, may cause some to deviate from the general rule; and though we cannot justify any who are remiss in the discharge of the relative dutics of society, we may justify the doctrines and principles they acknowledge, from the charge of leading them into this mistake, unless it can be proved that St. Paul's preaching was justly chargeable with the same fault.

But these are small things compared to what he says in another place. He complains to the Philippians in this affecting language (Phil. iii. 18, 19:) "Many walk (not some only, but many,) of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies to the cross of Christ,‡

pointed: those who once would have plucked out their own eyes for his service, afterwards accounted him their enemy, for telling them the truth. We need not therefore wonder if there are instances of this kind at present.

* That bitterness and strife were too frequent in the primitive churches, appears from James iii. 14; Gal. v. 15; and other texts. Our Lord's admonition, Matth. vii. 3—5. has always been too little regarded; and few are yet sufficiently convinced of the folly and absurdity of pointing out, and in an angry spirit condemning, the mistakes and faults of others, while we indulge greater in ourselves. Reformation (like modern charity) should begin at home!

† See James iv. 9. The word κατηφεια rendered *heaviness*, answers nearest to *dejection;* the derivation importing a downcast countenance; and it expresses that kind of sorrow which sinks the spirits, and fixes the eye upon the earth. Something of this is usually discernable when a real conviction of sin takes place in the heart. The inspired apostle recommends this temper and demeanour as most suitable to the case of sinners who are destitute of faith and love, and cannot therefore rejoice upon good grounds; and yet when any person begins to be impressed in this manner, and to see the propriety of the apostle's advice, it frequently happens, that all who know him, both friends and enemies, will agree to pronounce him disordered in his senses. So different, so opposite, are the Spirit of God, and the spirit of the world!

‡ What disagreeable things the apostle was apprehensive of meeting, when he should revisit Corinth, we may learn from 2 Cor. xii. 20, 21.

whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, who mind earthly things." St. Paul had occasion to express himself thus, and that again and again, even in the golden days of primitive christianity. Could their worst enemies have given them a worse character! Can even malice itself desire to fix a harsher imputation upon any denomination of people now subsisting? Yet these are the words of truth and soberness, the words of an inspired apostle, the words not of resentment but of grief: he spoke of it weeping; he would willingly have hoped better things; but he knew what tempers and practices were inconsistent with a sincere acceptance of the gospel; and, unless he would shut his eyes, and stop his ears, he could not but be sensible that many who were reputed christians dishonoured the name of christianity, and caused the ways of truth to be evil spoken of. Now, what is the consequence? Shall the apostle bear the blame of the evils and abominations he lamented?* for, if he had not preached, these evils would not have appeared under the christian name. Shall the wickedness of his pretended followers be charged as the necessary effect of that pure and heavenly doctrine which he had delivered? By no means. The grace of God, which he preached, taught, and enabled those who received it in their hearts to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world. If inquiry was made concerning the tendency of his doctrine, he could appeal to the tempers and lives of multitudes (1 Cor. iii. 2, 3,) who had been thereby delivered from the love and power of sin, and filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. But it was likewise true that they were still encumbered with a depraved nature: they were in a world full of temptations and snares; and as their numbers were very great, some instances had occurred of persons sincerely well disposed, who had too visibly declined from the rule by which they professed and desired to walk. Against their mistakes and faults he watchfully directed his exhortations and admonitions, as occasions offered; and they were generally attended with a good effect, to convince, humble, and restore the offenders (2 Cor. vii. 9,) and to increase their circumspection for the time to come. It was true likewise that there were some gathered by the preaching of the gospel into the number of professors, who were not effectually called and changed by the Spirit of God. These, though for a time they had a name to live, were no better than dead; and one reason why the Lord permitted the offences and divisions we have mentioned to take place was that, by the means of such heresies, those that were approved might be made manifest, and the chaff separated from the wheat; for though the ignorant world would call even those persons christians, whose conduct proved them enemies to the cross of Christ, yet time, the test of truth, unanswerably evinced the difference. Thus St. John, who lived some years after the rest of the apostles, and saw many turn their backs upon the teachers and doctrines they had once owned, has observed to this purpose:—"They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us," 1 John ii. 19. In a word, there were too many pretenders; some things amiss where the heart and views were right in the main, and imperfections in the best: the scorners and cavillers, who hated the light of the gospel, and were always in search of something to confirm their prejudices against it, met with much answerable to their wishes, even in the first and best churches; but to men of candour, who were ingenuous seekers of the truth, the spirituality, humility, and brotherly love that prevailed among the christians, and the powerful effects of their public ordinances, demonstrated that the truth was on their side, and that God was assuredly with them.

We offer the same apology, the same train of reasoning in behalf of what is now so generally deemed the foolishness of preaching. The doctrines we defend, which some (who cannot do it ignorantly) have the effrontery to misrepresent as novel opinions, are, we doubt not, the doctrines of Christ and his apostles; and in substance the doctrines taught from the word of God by Wickliffe, Luther, and the venerable reformers of our own church. We preach Christ crucified, Christ the end of the law for righteousness, and the power of God for sanctification to every one that believeth; we preach salvation by grace through faith in his blood; and we are sure that they who receive this doctrine unfeignedly will, by their lives and conversations, demonstrate it to be a doctrine according to godliness: they are not indeed delivered from infirmities, they are liable to mistakes and indiscretions, and see more amiss in themselves than their worst enemies can charge them with; but sin is their burden; they sigh to be delivered from it, and they expect a complete redemption. We cannot indeed say so much for all who ont-

* The apostle knew that some did, or would presume to infer a liberty to sin from the doctrine which he preached (Rom. vi 1,) yet he would not suppress or disguise the truths of God to prevent such a poor disingenuous perversion: he knew likewise that no one who had tasted that the Lord is gracious, can either form such a conclusion himself, or listen to it if proposed by others; therefore he thought it unnecessary to refute it at large. Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid! This is a sufficient answer. Thus absurd blasphemy exposes and confutes itself: the terms are inconsistent, impossible, and contradictory in the highest degree.

wardly avow a belief of this doctrine: there are pretenders who, while they profess to believe in God, in works they deny him. But it has been so from the beginning. The miscarriages of such persons are charged indiscriminately upon the societies among whom they are mixed, and upon the truths which they seem to approve; but there is a righteous God, who in due time will vindicate his own gospel, and his own people from all aspersions. St. Paul observed such things in his day, and he spoke of them likewise, but he spoke of them weeping. The true state of the mind may be determined from the temper with which the miscarriages of professors are observed. The profane expatiate on them with delight, the self-righteous with disdain; but they who know themselves, and love the Lord, cannot speak of them without the sincerest emotions of grief: they are concerned for the honour of the gospel, which is defamed under this pretence; they are grieved for the unhappy and dangerous state of those by whom such offences come, and they fear for themselves, lest the enemy should gain an advantage over them likewise, for they know they have no strength nor goodness of their own; therefore, avoiding unnecessary reflections on others, they endeavour to maintain a watchful jealousy over themselves, and to fix their hearts and hopes upon Christ Jesus their Lord, who, they are persuaded, is able to keep them from falling, to save them to the uttermost, and at length to present them faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy.

CHAPTER IV.

Of the heresies propagated by false teachers in the apostles' days.

THE parables in the 13th chapter of St. Matthew are prophetical of the reception and event of the gospel in succeeding ages. In this view our Lord himself has explained them. Wherever it is preached, the hearers may be classed according to the distribution in the parable of the sower: some hear without understanding or reflection; in some it excites a hasty emotion in the natural affections, and produces an observable and sudden change in their conduct, resembling the effects of a real conversion to God; but the truth not being rooted in the heart, nor the soul united to Christ by a living faith, these hopeful appearances are sooner or later blasted, and come to nothing: others are really convinced in their judgment of the truth and importance of what they hear, but their hearts cleave to the dust, and the love of this world, the care of what they have, the desire of what they have not, the calls of business, or the solicitations of pleasure, choke the word which they seem to receive, so that it brings forth no fruit to perfection: a part, however, (usually the smallest part,) who are compared to the good ground, are disposed and enabled, by divine grace, to receive it thankfully, as life from the dead. And though they meet with many difficulties, and, like the corn upon the ground, pass through a succession of trying and changing seasons, yet, having the love, promise, and power of God engaged in their behalf, in defiance of frosts, and blasts, and storms, they are brought to maturity, and, when fully ripe, are safely gathered into his garner, Matth. iii. 12. This is an epitome of the ecclesiastical history of every nation, and of every parish, to which this word of salvation is sent.

But the parable of the tares (Matth. xiii. 12,) teaches us farther to expect, that besides the general influence which Satan, as the God of this world, will exert to blind the eyes of mankind, lest the light of the glorious gospel should shine upon them (2 Cor. iv. 4,) he will take occasion, from the knowledge of the truth, to insinuate a variety of errors. His first attempts in this way are often so specious and unsuspected, that they are compared to a man's sowing seed by stealth, and in the night, but, as the corn grew, a large crop of tares springing up with it, demonstrated that an enemy had been there. This, in fact, has been universally the case, in every country and age where the gospel has been received; and we may remark, that the sowing the good seed was the occasion of the tares being cast into the same ground. When a people are involved in gross darkness and ignorance, sleeping in a false peace, and buried in the pleasures and pursuits of the world, they have neither leisure, nor inclination, to invent or attend to novelties in religion; each one is satisfied with that form (if even the form of godliness is retained,) which he has received from his parents, and neither pretends nor desires to be wiser than those who went before him: but when the truth has shone forth and been received, and seems to bid fair for farther success, Satan employs all his power and subtlety, either to suppress or counterfeit it, or both. Much has been done in the former way; he has prevailed so far as to enkindle the fiercest animosities against the nearest relatives, and persuaded men that they might do acceptable service to God, by punishing his faithful servants with torture, fire, and sword (John xvi. 2:) and no less industrious and successful has he been in practising upon the passions and prejudices of mankind to admit and propagate, instead of the gospel of Christ, and under that name, an endless diversity of opinions, utterly incompatible with it. Of these some are ingenious and artful, adapted to gratify the pride of those who are wise in their own conceits; others

more gross and extravagant, suited to inflame the imaginations, or to gratify the appetites of such persons as have not a turn for speculation and refinement.

As these appearances have always accompanied the gospel, so they have always been a stumbling-block and offence to the world, and have furnished those who hated the light with a pretext for rejecting it: and the doctrines of truth have been charged as the source and cause of those errors which have only sprung from their abuse and perversion. When Popery, for a series of ages, detained mankind in darkness and bondage, and deprived them of the knowledge of the holy scriptures, the tide of error ran uniformly in one great channel; when dead works were substituted in the place of living faith; and the worship and trust which is only due to Jesus the great Mediator, was blasphemously directed to subordinate intercessors, to angels and to saints, whether real or pretended; when forgiveness of sin was expected, not by the blood of Christ, but by penances, pilgrimages, masses, and human absolutions, by the repetition of many prayers, or the payment of sums of money; while things continued thus, the world was generally in that state of stupidity and blind security which is miscalled religious peace and uniformity; and the controversies of the times were chiefly confined to those points which immediately affected the power, wealth, or pre-eminence of the several religious orders by whom the people were implicitly led. Some differences of opinion were indeed known; but the charge of heresy and dangerous innovations was seldom so much as pretended against any, but the few who refused to wear the mark of the beast upon their right hands and foreheads, and who, by the mercy of God, retained and professed the main truths of christianity in some degree of power and purity. But when it pleased God to revive the knowledge of the gospel, by the ministry of Luther and his associates, and many were turned from darkness to light, the enemy of mankind presently changed his methods, and, by his influence, the sowing of the good seed was followed by tares in abundance. In the course of a few years, the glory of the Reformation was darkened, and its progress obstructed, by the enthusiasm and infatuation of men, who, under a pretence of improving upon Luther's plan, propagated the wildest, most extravagant, and blasphemous opinions, and perpetrated, under the mask of religion, such acts of cruelty, villany, and licentiousness, as have been seldom heard of in the world. The papists beheld these excesses with pleasure: many of them could not but know that Luther, and the heads of the Reformation, did all that could be expected from them, to show the folly and iniquity of such proceedings; but, against the light of truth and fact, they laboured to persuade the world, that these were the necessary consequences of Luther's doctrine; and that no better issue could be justly hoped for when men presumed to depart from the authorised standards of popes and councils, and to read and examine the scriptures for themselves.

This religious madness, was, however, of no long duration: the people who held tenets inconsistent with the peace of society, were deservedly treated as rebels and incendiaries by the governing powers; the ringleaders were punished, and the multitudes dispersed; their most obnoxious errors were gradually abandoned, and are now in a manner forgot. After the peace of Passau, the Reformation acquired an establishment in Germany, and other places; and since that time error has assumed a milder form, and has been supported by softer methods, and more respectable names.

In our own country, the same spirit of enthusiasm and disorder has appeared at different times, though it has been restrained by the providence of God, from proceeding to the same extremities, and has been most notorious, when, or soon after, the power of gospel-truth has been more eminently revived; for, as I have already observed, when religion is upon the decline, and only so much of a profession retained as is consistent with the love of the present world, and a conformity to the maxims and practices of the many, we seldom hear of any errors prevailing, but such as will find a favourable toleration, and may be avowed without exciting very strong and general expressions of contempt and ill-will against those who maintain them. But whenever real religion, as a life of faith in the Son of God, is set forth upon the principles of scripture, and, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, witnesses are raised up, who by their conduct demonstrate that they are crucified with Christ, to the law, to sin, and to the world, then is the time for Satan to discredit this work, by imposing a variety of false views and appearances upon the minds of the ignorant and unwary; and he is seldom at a loss for fit instruments to promote his designs. Since the late revival of the Reformation doctrines amongst us, we have perhaps fewer things of this kind to apologize for, than have been observable on any similar occasion; and the best apology we can offer for what has been really blameable, is, to show that it was even thus in the apostles' days; and that, if any arguments taken from these blemishes are conclusive against what some choose to call the novel doctrines now, they would, with equal reason, conclude against the validity of the New Testament.

And not to confine myself to such things as the world is most prone to except against, I shall endeavour to show, that the seeds of

all errors and heresies, the fashionable as well as those which are more generally despised, were sown in the first age, and appeared so early as to give occasion for the apostles' censures against them. I do not mean by this to parallel every name and every singularity that a subtle head or a warm imagination may have started; but to assign, in general, the principles to which all these delusions may be reduced, the sources to which these inebriating and dangerous streams may be traced: for, indeed, the operations of the human mind seem to be much more simple and limited than we are ordinarily aware. As there can be no new truths, though every truth appears new to us which we have not known before, so it is probable, that there can be now no new errors; at least it is certain, that a competent knowledge of antiquity, or even a careful perusal of the apostles' writings, will furnish sufficient evidence, that some modern authors and teachers are by no means the inventors of the ingenious schemes they have presented to the public. Truth, like the sun, maintains a constant course; every thing would stagnate and die if we were deprived of it for a single day; but errors are like comets; which, though too eccentric to be subject exactly to our computations, yet have their periods of approach and recess, and some of them have appeared and been admired, have been withdrawn and forgot, over and over again.

Error, in the simplest form, is a misapprehension of the truth. Some part of the gospel must be known before any erroneous conceptions of it can take place. Thus we read (Acts viii. 9—22,) that Simon Magus was struck with Philip's preaching, and the effects which attended it: he was so far impressed, that it is said he believed; that is, he made a profession of faith; he was convinced there was something extraordinary in the doctrine, but he understood it not: and the event showed he had no part nor lot in the matter. He is thought by the ancients to have been the founder of that capital sect, which is known in general by the name of Gnostics, and which, like a gangrene, spread far and wide, in various branches and subdivisions, each successive head refining upon the system of the preceding. In Sir Peter King's History of the Apostles' Creed, and Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, the English reader may see the substance of the figments which these unhappy men, wise in their own conceit, vented under the name of the christian religion.

The doctrine of Jesus Christ, and of him crucified, which St. Paul preached, and in which he gloried, is the pillar and ground of truth, the rock upon which the church is built, and against which the gates of hell shall never prevail, 1 Cor. ii. 2; Gal. vi. 14; 1 Tim. iii. 15; Matth. xvi. 18. Mistakes in this point are fundamental, dangerous, and if persisted in, destructive; for as such a knowledge of God as is connected with his favour and communion is eternal life, so none can come to the Father but by the Son (John xvii. 3; and xiv. 6,) nor can any know him, but those to whom the Son will reveal him, Matth. xi. 27. On this account Satan's great endeavour (and on his success herein the strength of his kingdom depends) is to darken and pervert the minds of men, lest they should acknowledge and understand what the scriptures declare of his person, character, and offices, as well knowing, that if these are set aside, whatever else is left of religion will be utterly unavailing. Jesus Christ is revealed in the scriptures, and was preached by his first disciples, as God manifest in the flesh, a divine person in the human nature, who, by submitting to ignominy, pain, and death, made a full and proper atonement for sin, and wrought out an everlasting righteousness in favour of all who should believe in his name; and he is set forth in that nature in which he suffered, as the object of our supreme love, trust, and adoration. Other important doctrines, largely insisted on in the word of God, such as the demerit of sin, the obnoxiousness of sinners to punishment, and the misery and incapacity of man in his fallen state, are closely connected with this, and cannot be satisfactorily explained without it. The necessary method of our recovery exhibits the most striking view of the ruin in which sin has involved us, and is the only adequate standard whereby to estimate the unspeakable love of God manifested in our redemption. On the other hand, a knowledge of the true state of mankind, in consequence of the fall, is necessary to obviate the prejudices of our minds against a procedure, which, though in itself the triumph of divine wisdom, is in many respects contradictory to our natural, and therefore false, notions of the fitness of things. St. Paul declares, that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he discern them (1 Cor. ii. 14;) and in another place, that no man can say (that is, sincerely, and upon solid conviction) that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost, 1 Cor. xii. 3. To worship him who had been hanged on a cross, and to expect eternal happiness from his death, was to the Jews a stumbling-block; it offended their notions of the unity of the godhead, and opposed their high esteem of their own righteousness; and to the Greeks, or Heathens, it appeared the greatest folly and absurdity imaginable. For these reasons the gospel was rejected by multitudes as soon as proposed, and those who preached it were accounted babblers and madmen, not because they were at a loss for propriety of expression, or discovered any thing ridiculous in their conduct, but because they enforced

tenets which were adjudged inconsistent with the common sense of mankind.

But, notwithstanding these prejudices, the energy of their preaching, and the miraculous powers with which it was accompanied, made an impression upon many persons, so far as to induce them to profess the name of Jesus, though they were not spiritually enlightened into the mysteries of his religion, nor their hearts thoroughly subdued to the obedience of the faith. There are other points within the compass of the gospel-ministry more adapted to affect the minds of men in their natural state. Few are so hardened, but they have a conscience of sin, some fears with respect to its consequences, and a preintimation of immortality. Such are capable of being greatly affected and moved by a pathetic declaration of the terrors of the Lord, the solemnities of a future judgment, the joys of heaven, or the torments of hell. We cannot doubt that these topics, when insisted on with that strength of argument and warmth of spirit, of which the apostles were capable, would engage the attention of many who were not partakers of that divine light, by which alone the whole scheme of truth, in its harmony and beauty, can be perceived. The seed sown upon the rock sprang up immediately, the quickness of its growth, and the suddenness of its decay, proceeding from the same cause, a want of depth in the soil. Not a few of these hasty believers presently renounced the faith altogether, and others, who went not so far as to disown the name, endeavoured to accommodate the doctrine to their prepossessions, and to explain or reject what they could not understand, in such a manner as to form a system upon the whole agreeable to their own wills. Men of corrupt and prejudiced minds thus tampered with the truth; and their inventions, when made known, were adopted by others of the same cast of thought: as they were differently inclined, they directed their inquiries to different points, and each found partizans and adherents in their respective ways. Thus errors, and in consequence, sects and divisions, were multiplied; for when men depart from the unerring guidance of God's word, there is no end of their imaginations; one singularity produces another, and every new leader is stimulated to carry his discoveries farther than those who have gone before him. Farther, as human nature is universally the same, we may judge from what we have seen, that there always have been persons inclined to join in a religious profession, from the unworthy motives of worldly interest, and a desire to stand fair with their fellow-creatures. Temptations to this were not so strong indeed at first, nor so general, as they have often been since; yet the force of friendship, relation, (and when christianity had been of some years standing,) education, custom, and human authority, is very considerable: nor is even persecution a sufficient bar against hypocrites and intruders. They who suffer for the gospel, though despised by the world, are highly esteemed and considered by their own side; it procures them an attention which they would not have otherwise obtained; it may give them an importance in their own eyes, furnish them with something to talk of, and make them talked of by others. There are people who, for the sake of these advantages, will, for a season, venture upon many hardships, though, when the trial comes very close, they will not endure to the end. In a word, there is no reason to doubt but that, amongst the numbers who professed the gospel at first, there would be found the same variety of tempers, circumstances, views, and motives, as have ordinarily appeared amongst a great number of people, suddenly formed in any other period of time; and the apostles' writings prove that it was really so. From these general principles, we may easily account for the early introduction and increase of errors and heresies, and that they should be in a manner the same as they have sprung up with, or followed succeeding revivals of the truth. Nor is it just cause of surprise, if sincere christians have been, in some instances, entangled in the prevailing errors of the times: designing no harm themselves, they suspect none, and are therefore liable to be imposed on by those who lie in wait to deceive, Ephes. iv. 14.

When christianity first appeared, the Heathen wisdom, known by the name of Philosophy, was in the highest repute: it had two principal branches, the Grecian and the Eastern. The former admitted (at least did not condemn) a multiplicity and subordination of deities; amongst whom, as agents and mediators between their supreme Jupiter and mortals, the care and concerns of mankind were subdivided, to each of which homage and sacrifices were due: their mythology, or the pretended history of their divinities, was puerile and absurd, and many of their religious rites inconsistent with the practice of public decorum and good morals. Some of the philosophers endeavoured to guard against the worst abuses, and to form a system of religion and morality, in which they seem to have proceeded as far as could be expected from men who were totally ignorant of the true God, and of their own state: some truths they were acquainted with, truths in theory, but utterly impracticable upon any principles but those of revelation. Amongst a vast number of opinions concerning the chief good of man, a few held, that man's honour and happiness must consist in conformity to, and communion with, God; but how to attain these desirable ends, they were entirely ignorant.

The eastern philosophy was solemn and mysterious, and not less fabulous than the other; but the fables were of a graver cast. It seemed to mourn under the sense of moral evil, and laboured in vain to account for its entrance; its precepts were gloomy and severe; and a perfect course of bodily mortification was recommended as the great expedient to purify the soul from all its defilements, and to re-unite it, by degrees, to its great Author.

St. Paul, in several passages (Col. ii. 8; 1 Tim. vi. 20,) cautions the christians against corrupting the simplicity of their faith, by admitting the reasoning and inventions of vain men. In some places (1 Tim. i. 4; 2 Tim. ii. 9) he seems to speak more directly of the Gnostics, whose heresies were little more than the fables of the eastern philosophy, in a new dress, with an acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as an extraordinary person, yet so as utterly to exclude and deny all the important truths revealed in the scriptures concerning him. They dignified their scheme with the name of Gnosis, or Science; but it was falsely so called, and stood in direct opposition to the gospel. On other occasions (Rom. i. 21—23; 1 Cor. i. 20—23,) he appears to have had the Grecian philosophy chiefly in view. But, notwithstanding his admonitions, it was not long before the errors of philosophy had an ill influence upon the professors of the christian faith; and even several of the fathers darkened the glory of the truth, by endeavouring to accommodate it to the taste and genius of that Heathen wisdom which they had before admired, and still thought might be useful to embellish and recommend the gospel.

But to confine myself to the apostles' times, it is plain, from the epistles of St. Paul, John, Jude, and Peter (Tit. i. 10; 1 John iv. 1; 2 Pet. ii. 18, 19; Jude 4,) that many false prophets and teachers had, in their days, crept in, who propagated damnable heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, turning the grace of God into licentiousness, speaking great swelling words of vanity, boasting themselves of freedom, while they were in bondage to their own lusts. And in the epistle to the church of Ephesus (Rev. ii. 6,) our Lord himself mentions a sect, who bore the name of Nicolaitans, and expresses his disapprobation of them in these awful terms: "Whom I also hate!" The peculiar tenets of the people condemned in these passages of scripture are not expressly mentioned; but from these sources were most probably derived the sects which, in the second century, were known by the names of their several leaders, Cerinthus, Saturninus, Cerdo, Marcion, Basilides, Valentinus, and others: who all, building upon the common foundation of the eastern philosophy, or Gnosis, superadded their own peculiarities, and were differently, though equally, remote from the truth. The one thing in which they all agreed was, in perverting and opposing the scripture-doctrine concerning the person of Christ. On this point their opinions were as discordant as absurd: some denied that Christ was come in the flesh; they pretended that Christ was sent from heaven by the supreme God, and united himself to Jesus, the son of Joseph and Mary, at his baptism; and that, when the Jews apprehended the man Jesus, and nailed him te the cross, Christ returned to heaven, and left him to suffer by himself. Others ascribed a heavenly derivation to his body, affirming that it passed through the Virgin Mary, without any participation of her substance; while others asserted, that he had no substantial flesh; but that his body was a mere phantom, or apparition, which was neither really born, nor did or could truly suffer. Again, there were others who held the reality of his human nature, yet maintained, that Christ did not suffer at all, but that Simon of Cyrene, the bearer of his cross, being taken by the Jews for him, was crucified in his stead, while he stood by, and laughed at their mistake. A brief recital of these extravagancies is sufficient for my present purpose: for a more particular account, I refer the reader to Sir Peter King's History of the Creed, already mentioned. Many passages in the apostles' writings are directed against these dangerous errors; for they strike at the root of the faith and hope of the gospel, and are subversive of the whole tenor both of the Old and New Testament. It was believed by the ancients, that St. John wrote his gospel with some view to these heresies; and it is certain that, in his first epistle, where, putting the disciples upon their guard against the many false prophets who were gone out into the world, he observes, that the common point, in which all their divers opinions agreed, was a denial that Jesus Christ was come in the flesh, 1 John ii. 22, and iv. 3. He reminds them, that as they had heard Antichrist must come, even so now there were many Antichrists; and that the name was applicable to all who denied that Jesus is the Christ. He admits that these false teachers went out from amongst themselves, that is, they had borne the christian name; but he refers to the doctrines they taught, as a sufficient proof that they had never been of the number of true christians; for if they had been of us, no doubt they would have continued with us, 1 John ii. 19. If opinions, equally wild and extravagant, were at this time maintained and propagated by persons who, for a season, had been warm for truth and reformation, we are not afraid that they would prejudice our cause with any who will allow due weight to the reasoning of St. John; for if they had been really of us once, they would have still continued with us.

But the truth is, the teachers in our time, whose leading tenets most nearly symbolize with these ancient heresies, are not charged, or even suspected of having had any attachment to the doctrines which I am concerned to vindicate; nor is an apology expected from them, for they gave but little offence. Since the fabulous disguise, under which the Gnostics of old veiled their opinions, has been laid aside, their opposition to the deity and atonement of Christ has been adopted by so many who are applauded for ingenuity, fine reasoning, and great learning, that it bids fair to be the fashionable divinity of the age; and though the sufferings of Jesus are not denied, yet their proper causes and ends are openly exploded; and the attempt has often proved an easy path to acceptance, wealth, and dignity.

The attachment of the Jewish converts to the law of Moses was another source of error, which occasioned daily disputes in the churches, and gave rise, in the issue, to dangerous heresies, subversive of the true faith. Even those of them who had sincerely received the gospel, could not easily be persuaded, that a law given to Moses by God himself, with so much solemnity, from Mount Sinai, was to be entirely abrogated; and that their obligation to it was, *ipso facto*, vacated the moment they believed in Jesus, who, by his obedience unto death, had accomplished all its types and ceremonies, and wrought out for his people an everlasting righteousness commensurate to its utmost requirements. The apostles, who, after the pattern of their Lord, were gentle and tender to the weak of the flock, bore with their infirmities (Rom. xiv. 2. 6,) and allowed them to retain a distinction of meats, and days, and other observances, provided they did not consider these things in such a point of view as to interfere with God's appointed method of justification by faith in his Son. But the matter was carried much farther; for no sooner was there a church formed at Antioch, than they were troubled with perverse teachers (Acts xv. 1) who told them, that except they were circumcised, and kept the law of Moses, they could not be saved. The Galatians were greatly hurt by teachers of this sort (Gal. v. 4;) and as the Jews were dispersed through all the provinces, the peace of the church was more or less affected by their attempts to enforce the observance of the law, in almost every place, till after the epistle to the Hebrews was received, and obedience to the Levitical law rendered impracticable by the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, Col. ii. 16. Tit. i. 10. Phil. iii. 2. 1 Tim. i. 7. From that period, it is probable, the distinction of Jew and Gentile believers ceased, and both parties were firmly incorporated into one body: but a great number of the zealots for the law separated themselves, and were known in the following age by the name of Ebionites, adopting for their rule a mixture of law and gospel, so very different from the gospel St. Paul preached, that they openly expressed an abhorrence both of his person and writings.

We have an account likewise of some pretended teachers, who opposed the important doctrine of the resurrection. Some expressly maintained, that there was no resurrection, whom St. Paul confutes at large, in the 15th chap. of his first epistle to the Corinthians. Others affirmed that the resurrection was past already, 2 Tim. 18. Perhaps they pretended that a moral change was designed by the metaphorical expression of a resurrection. The philosophers had used the word in this sense: and this would be sufficient to gain it admittance with some, who would willingly reconcile their profession to the wisdom of the world. In either way the very foundations of hope were removed. If this point is denied, the whole system of christian doctrine falls to the ground; and that dreadful train of consequences must be admitted, which the apostle enumerates in 1 Cor. xv. 14. 18. "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith also vain, ye are yet in your sins; then they also who are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." Since the fertile resurrection of ancient mistakes, which is the sin and scandal of the present age, we have been gravely told, that the word signifies no more than the soul's awaking from the long sleep into which they suppose the period we call death will plunge it; and that the body has no share in the revival, but dies without hope: but we may thank God for the scriptures, which brings comfort where philosophy gives up the cause as desperate. Faith in Christ is so closely connected with the doctrine of a resurrection, that it is common with those who oppose the former to use all their address to explain the latter quite away; and whether they say, it is past already, or, that it will never come, their motives, their design, and their manner of reasoning, are the same.

That there were persons who abused the doctrines of grace, as an encouragement to continue in the practice of sin, may be inferred from the epistle of St. James, and several passages of the other apostles. Such, in our modern phrase, are styled Antinomians; a name, it must be confessed, of very indeterminate application: it is an epithet, which many would fix, indiscriminately, upon all who preach a free salvation by faith in the blood of Jesus. If it is all of grace, and we can do nothing of ourselves; if it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy; then we may live as we please, endeavours are useless, and obedience unnecessary, Rom. xi. 6, and

ix. 16; 2 Cor. iii. 5. These are the inferences which the unenlightened heart charges as unavoidable consequences from the gospel-doctrine; and from hence we obtain a corroborating proof, that we do not mistake St. Paul's sense, or preach a gospel different from his, because he foresaw that the same objections would seem to lie against himself (Rom. iii. 7, and ix. 19;) and he guards and protests against such a perversion, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid," Rom. vi. 1. It seems to have been upon this account that he was slandered, and by some affirmed to have taught, "Let us do evil, that good may come" (Rom. iii. 8;) that is, in modern language (and such things are not spoken in corners amongst us,) If any man would be a proper subject of what they call grace, let him become still more vile, and plunge into the most atrocious wickedness; for the greater the sinner, the better qualified for mercy. We are content to be reproached, as St. Paul was in his time, for the truth's sake; and we would be chiefly concerned for the unhappy scoffers, who, unless God is pleased to give them repentance unto life, will one day wish they had been idiots, or lunatics, rather than have vented their malicious wit against the grace and gospel of the Lord Christ. But it must be allowed, we have seen Antinomians in the worst sense of the word, men who have pleaded for sin, and while they have laid claim to faith, have renounced and blasphemed that holiness, without which, no man shall see the Lord. We cannot wonder, that even candid and well-meaning persons have been greatly prejudiced and discouraged in their inquiries after truth, by the presumption and wickedness of such pretended christians. But no period of the church, in which the gospel-doctrine was known and preached, has been free from offences of this sort. It was so in the apostles' days. There were then many unruly and vain talkers, and deceivers, who subverted whole houses, teaching things which they ought not (Tit. i. 10, 11;) who professed that they knew God, but in works denied him, being abominable, and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate (Tit. i. 16;) who pretended to faith, but were destitute of those fruits which true faith always produces, James ii. 14. These are described (Jude 12, 13,) as clouds without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, twice dead, plucked up by the root; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever; sporting themselves with their own deceivings, and beguiling unstable souls, 2 Pet. ii. 13, 14. In opposition to such deceivers, it is written, If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth, 1 John i. 6. He that saith, I know him and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him, 1 John ii. 4. For every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure, 1 John iii. 3. The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his; and, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity, 2 Tim. ii. 19.

St. Paul, writing to the Thessalonians concerning the man of sin (2 Thess. ii. 3—10,) who was to be fully revealed in the following ages, reminds them, that the mystery of iniquity, though at that time restrained from a full manifestation, did already work; teaching us, that the seeds of that grand apostacy, which at length overspread the whole professing church, were sown, and springing up, at the time of his writing. And he mentions several particulars in his epistle to the Colossians (chap. ii. 18—23;) such as a voluntary, or self-devised humility, in worshipping angels as mediators or intercessors; a dogmatic inhibition of things which God had left free; and a specious scheme of will-worship and mortification, which, under pretence of self-denial, did really gratify pride, vanity, and self-righteousness. The progress of our history will show what a harvest of dreadful and wide-spreading evils were produced from these principles, until at length the gospel of Christ was wholly obscured, and the lives and consciences of men were given up to the power of Antichrist, who, as God, insolently sat down in the temple of God, and exalted himself above all laws, human and divine. It is sufficient to my purpose at present, to take notice, that the beginnings of that spiritual infatuation, which so long detained the world in chains, and darkness, and slavery, under the tyranny of the church of Rome, were observable in St. Paul's time, and therefore deserve a place in the list of those pestilent heresies by which the enemy of souls attempted to defile the faith, and disturb the peace of the primitive church.

Many other things are alluded to, which, for want of authentic records of the first century, we cannot with certainty explain. Besides the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, already mentioned, we read of the blasphemy of them who said they were Jews but were not, but of the synagogue of Satan (Rev. iii. 9;) of them who held the doctrine of Balaam, and of the woman Jezebel, who called herself a prophetess, Rev. ii. 14. 20. These were certainly heretics: for our Lord severely rebukes the churches for not opposing them to the utmost; and, as he gives different names, they probably differed from each other, though their ultimate tendency was the same, to pervert the faith of the hearers, and to introduce licentiousness of practice. The gospel-truth is a doctrine according to godliness, and has a sanctifying influence: for the grace of God

teaches all who are partakers of it, to forsake all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in the present world, Titus ii. 11, 12. But errors and heresies, in whatever degree they prevail, have poisonous effects upon those who admit them; some are calculated to set aside the whole frame of obedience which we owe to our God and Saviour, and the most refined and plausible will deliver the soul into the power of some easy, besetting, and beloved sin, and furnish arms and arguments to maintain it. And this explains what would otherwise seem a very strange phenomenon. When the truth is proposed with the greatest clearness, and the greatest advantages, its votaries, at all times, and in all places, have been but few; but whoever will stand up on the side of error, however wild and absurd his opinions and conduct may be, will hardly fail of obtaining adherents. It is because error will tolerate those lusts and follies which truth will not endure; and in the present state of human depravity, more people will be found willing to give up their understandings than to part with their sins.

We may likewise collect from several texts in the epistles, that there were those of old who denied what the scriptures teach concerning the depravity of human nature, the real guilt of sin (1 John i. 8. 10;) the influences of the Holy Spirit (Jude 19,) and the terrors of a future judgment (2 Pet. iii. 9,) though we cannot be sure that these doctrines were opposed so openly and so strenuously as they are in our own days. But I have enumerated enough to answer my purpose by way of apology for the evangelical doctrine, the modern opposers of the last mentioned points not being under any suspicion or charge of what is called enthusiasm; and all who are despised or persecuted for resting the hope of their salvation solely on the mediation of Jesus and his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, are known to acknowledge them as essential truths; indeed, they stand inseparably connected with what they believe of his person, offices, power, and grace. A conscience impressed with the majesty, holiness, and justice of the great God, and that trembles at the denunciations of his law against every transgression, dares not hope for peace without the discovery of an adequate atonement for sin, nor venture its eternal concerns upon the interposition of a creature. To such a one, all that is revealed of the love and sufferings of Jesus, would afford no solid ground of consolation, if the infinite dignity of his divine nature, and his voluntary substitution in the place, and on the behalf of sinners, were not revealed with equal clearness; and a conviction of that total insufficiency for every good work (2 Cor. iii. 5,) and the prevalence of indwelling sin (Rom. vii. 18—34,) which the scriptures so expressly declare to be the condition of every child of Adam, would plunge an awakened mind into hopeless despair, if it was not relieved by the gracious promise of the infallible Spirit (John xiv. 26, and xvi. 7. 13,) whose office is to teach, guide, comfort, and seal the children of God unto the day of complete redemption (Ephes. iv. 30;) but having such a great high priest (Heb. vii. 1, and ix. 24, and x. 19,) who, by his own blood, has entered into the holy place, to appear in the presence of God for us, and having, in the promise of the Holy Spirit (Rom. viii. 16. 26, 27,) a source of succour and comfort answerable to all our ignorance, weakness, necessities, and temptations, we are enabled in the midst of fightings and fears (2 Cor. vii. 5,) to maintain a humble confidence that we shall not be ashamed before him at his coming, but have boldness in the day of judgment, the great and terrible day of the Lord, 1 John ii. 28, and iv. 17. On the other hand, it is no wonder that those, who do not acknowledge the deity of the Saviour (not finding any other basis whereon to rest the validity of an atonement for sin,) should embrace every shadow of an argument against its necessity, and be willing to think as highly as possible of their own righteousness and abilities; or, that being thus persuaded that they can please God, without the influence of his Spirit, themselves, they should treat all claims to this assistance in others as enthusiasm and folly. Nor can we be surprised, that many who reject the scripture-testimony concerning Christ and the Holy Spirit, should use all their address to prove, that the soul sinks into sleep and inactivity at death, that the resurrection of the flesh is improbable, and that it is injurious to the goodness of God, to suppose he will inflict eternal punishment for sins committed within the compass of a short life. Such reasonings may be expected from men who presume upon the sufficiency of their own wisdom, who neither expect nor desire divine teaching, and who find a little relief in these sentiments, against the fears and forebodings which will sometimes force themselves upon their minds.

It appears, however, from the indisputable evidence of the New Testament, that, in the first age of the church, the enemy sowed the tares of error and heresy in great abundance, and that the figments published in that period by men who professed some regard to the name of Christ, have not been surpassed, either as to absurdity or wickedness, by any attempts of the same kind, in any age or country since. It is true the vigilance and authority of the apostles restrained these excesses from rising to that height to which they afterwards attained; but if the people who now object to the variety of names, sects, and sentiments, which have gradually prevailed amongst us within these thirty years past,

had lived in the primitive church, they would have had at least equal cause for making the like objections. If, upon these accounts, they now think themselves at liberty to reject all parties alike, without examination, as empty pretenders to the truth, purity, and power of religion, there is little doubt but they would have done the same then. The apostles were personally present with the first churches: their writings were appointed to be the rule of succeeding times, and, through the mercy of God are in our hands. Whoever is sincerely desirous to know the will of God, by attending to these lively oracles will be enabled to discern the path of truth and peace, through the midst of that maze of opinions wherein so many are bewildered and lost; but whoever is too wise or too indolent to search the scriptures humbly and diligently for himself, would have paid as little regard to the authority of the apostles, if he could have conversed with them: nay, the advantage is on our side; for, as the scriptures are held in professed veneration, we run no immediate risk of character or interest by consulting them; or they may be perused in retirement, unobserved by our nearest friends: whereas the apostles, though highly spoken of amongst us, were accounted while they lived, the filth and off-scouring of all things; they were despised for their poverty and the meanness of their appearance, and detested as bigots and enthusiasts; so that it required some degree of faith and grace not to be ashamed of them.

Let not the reader be offended, if I close this book, as I did the former, with entreating him to reflect on the importance of having right views of the gospel of Christ and of the spirit of christianity. These are topics of universal concern. A believer in Jesus, however obscure, unnoticed, or oppressed in the present life, is happy: he is a child of God, the charge of angels, and heir of glory (Rom. viii. 14. 17;) he has meat to eat that the world knows not of; and from the knowledge of his union and relation to his Redeemer (Phil. iv. 7,) he derives a peace which passes understanding, and a power suited to every service and circumstance of life: though weak in himself, he is strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus the Lord (2 Cor. xii. 9; 2 Tim. ii. 1,) upon whom he relies, as his wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and expects from him, in due time, a complete redemption from every evil (1 Cor. i. 30:) his faith is not merely speculative, like the cold assent which we give to a mathematical truth, nor is it the blind impulse of a warm imagination, but it is the effect of an apprehension of the wisdom, power, and love displayed in the redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ; it is a constraining principle (Gal. v. 6; Acts xv. 9; 1 John v. 4; Heb. xi. 1; 2 Cor. iii. 18,) that works by love, purifies the heart, and overcomes the world; it gives the foretaste and evidence of things invisible to mortal eyes, and, transforming the soul into the resemblance of what it beholds, fills the heart with benevolence, gentleness, and patience, and directs every action to the sublimest ends, the glory of God and the good of mankind.

But whatever is styled religion, that is not thus pure, thus peaceable, thus operative, or at least that does not lead the soul to desire the graces of the Spirit, and to seek them in God's appointed way, by faith in his Son, is unworthy of the name. If you have not the Spirit of Christ, you are none of his (Rom. viii. 9;) whatever else you may have, you have no interest in the promised blessings of the gospel; whatever else you can do, you cannot please God, Heb. xi. 6. If you do not count all things loss, and of no value (Phil. iii. 8,) in comparison of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord, you certainly do not understand the word gospel in St. Paul's sense; if you did, you would be of his mind: and are you not in danger of incurring that anathema which, under the influence of the Spirit of God, he denounces (1 Cor. xvi. 22) against all who love not the Lord Jesus? Search the scriptures, if you really think that in them you have eternal life, John v. 39. If, indeed, you could prove them to be cunningly-devised fables, you might neglect them without danger (2 Pet. i. 16;) but, if the scriptures are true, there is a day coming when God shall judge the world, Acts xvii. 31. I need not appeal to scripture to convince you that, whatever your situation in life is you must leave it, and experience a moment when the pleasures or honours of this world will afford you no comfort; but, if the scriptures are true, you must then appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; you must stand either at the right hand or the left, 2 Cor. v. 10. Important alternative! For to those on the left hand the King will say, "Depart from me, ye cursed," Matth. xxv. 41. If hitherto, while you have professed his name, you have had your heart filled with enmity against his doctrine and his people; if you have accounted his wisdom foolishness, and reproached the operations of his Spirit as enthusiasm and madness,—it is to be hoped you have done it through ignorance; you knew not what you did (1 Tim. i. 15; Luke xxiii. 34:) there is, then, forgiveness with him; as yet he is upon a throne of grace. May the Spirit of God lead you to him before he takes his seat upon the throne of judgment! otherwise you are lost for ever. My heart's desire and prayer to God, for my readers will be, that not one of them may fall under that awful sentence, Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days, which you shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you Acts xiii. 41.

OLNEY HYMNS,

IN

THREE BOOKS.

——————————Cantabitis, Arcades, inquit,
Montibus hæc vestris, soli cantare periti
Arcades. O mihi tum quam molliter ossa quiescant,
Vestra meos olim si fistula dicat amores!—*Virgil, Ecl.* x. 31.

And they sung as it were a new song before the throne;——and no man could learn that song, but the—redeemed from the earth.—*Rev.* xiv. 3.

As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.——2 *Cor.* vi. 10.

PREFACE.

Copies of a few of these Hymns have already appeared in periodical publications, and in some recent collections. I have observed one or two of them attributed to persons who certainly had no concern in them, but as transcribers. All that have been at different times parted with in manuscript are included in the present volume; and (if the information were of any great importance) the public may be assured, that the whole number were composed by two persons only. The original design would not admit of any other association. A desire of promoting the faith and comfort of sincere christians, though the principal, was not the only motive to this undertaking. It was likewise intended as a monument to perpetuate the remembrance of an intimate and endeared friendship. With this pleasing view, I entered upon my part, which would have been smaller than it is, and the book would have appeared much sooner, and in a very different form, if the wise, though mysterious providence of God, had not seen fit to cross my wishes. We had not proceeded far upon our proposed plan, before my dear friend was prevented, by a long and affecting indisposition, from affording me any farther assistance. My grief and disappointment were great; I hung my harp upon the willows, and for some time thought myself determined to proceed no farther without him. Yet my mind was afterwards led to resume the service. My progress in it, amidst a variety of other engagements, has been slow; yet, in a course of years, the Hymns amounted to a considerable number; and my deference to the judgment and desires of others, has at length overcome the reluctance I long felt to see them in print, while I had so few of my friend's Hymns to insert in the collection. Though it is possible a good judge of composition might be able to distinguish those which are his, I have thought it proper to preclude a misapplication, by subjoining the letter C* to each of them. For the rest I must be responsible.

There is a style and manner suited to the composition of Hymns, which may be more successfully, or at least more easily, attained by a versifier than by a poet. They should be Hymns, not Odes, if designed for public worship, and for the use of plain people. Perspicuity, simplicity, and ease, should be chiefly attended to; and the imagery and colouring of poetry, if admitted at all, should be indulged very sparingly, and with great judgment. The late Dr. Watts, many of whose Hymns are admirable patterns in this species of writing, might, as a poet, have a right to say, That it cost him some labour to restrain his fire.

* Cowper.

and to accommodate himself to the capacities of common readers. But it would not become me to make such a declaration. It behoved me to do my best. But though I would not offend readers of taste by a wilful coarseness and negligence, I do not write professedly for them. If the Lord, whom I serve, has been pleased to favour me with that mediocrity of talent, which may qualify me for usefulness to the weak and the poor of his flock, without quite disgusting persons of superior discernment, I have reason to be satisfied.

As the workings of the heart of man, and of the Spirit of God, are in general the same in all who are the subjects of grace, I hope most of these Hymns, being the fruit and expression of my own experience, will coincide with the views of real christians of all denominations. But I cannot expect that every sentiment I have advanced will be universally approved. However, I am not conscious of having written a single line, with an intention either to flatter or to offend any party or person upon earth. I have simply declared my own views and feelings, as I might have done if I had composed Hymns in some of the newly-discovered islands in the South Sea, where no person had any knowledge of the name of Jesus but myself. I am a friend of peace; and being deeply convinced, that no one can profitably understand the great truths and doctrines of the gospel, any farther than he is taught of God, I have not a wish to obtrude my own tenets upon others, in a way of controversy: yet I do not think myself bound to conceal them. Many gracious persons (for many such I am persuaded there are,) who differ from me, more or less, in those points which are called Calvinistic, appear desirous that the Calvinists should, for their sakes, studiously avoid every expression which they cannot approve. Yet few of them, I believe, impose a like restraint upon themselves, but think the importance of what they deem to be truth, justifies them in speaking their sentiments plainly and strongly. May I not plead for an equal liberty? The views I have received of the doctrines of grace are essential to my peace; I could not live comfortably a day or an hour without them. I likewise believe, yea, so far as my poor attainments warrant me to speak, I know them to be friendly to holiness, and to have a direct influence in producing and maintaining a gospel-conversation; and therefore I must not be ashamed of them.

The Hymns are distributed into three Books. In the first, I have classed those which are formed upon select passages of scripture, and placed them in the order of the books of the Old and New Testament. The second contains occasional Hymns, suited to particular seasons, or suggested by particular events or subjects. The third book is miscellaneous, comprising a variety of subjects relative to a life of faith in the Son of God, which have no express reference either to a single text of scripture, or to any determinate season or incident. These are farther subdivided into distinct heads. This arrangement is not so accurate, but that several of the Hymns might have been differently disposed. Some attention to method may be found convenient, though a logical exactness was hardly practicable. As some subjects in the several books are nearly coincident, I have, under the divisions in the third Book, pointed out those which are similar in the two former. And I have likewise, here and there, in the first and second, made a reference to Hymns of a like import in the third.

This Publication, which, with my humble prayer to the Lord for his blessing upon it, I offer to the service and acceptance of all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, of every name and in every place, into whose hands it may come, I more particularly dedicate to my dear friends in the parish and neighbourhood of Olney, for whose use the Hymns were originally composed; as a testimony of the sincere love I bear them, and as a token of my gratitude to the Lord, and to them, for the comfort and satisfaction with which the discharge of my ministry among them has been attended.

The hour is approaching, and, at my time of life, cannot be very distant, when my heart, my pen, and my tongue, will no longer be able to move in their service. But I trust, while my heart continues to beat, it will feel a warm desire for the prosperity of their souls; and while my hand can write, and my tongue speak, it will be the business and the pleasure of my life, to aim at promoting their growth and establishment in the grace of our God and Saviour. To this precious grace I commend them, and earnestly entreat them, and all who love his name, to strive mightily with their prayers to God for me, that I may be preserved faithful to the end, and enabled at last to finish my course with joy.

JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, Bucks, Feb. 15th 1779

OLNEY HYMNS.

BOOK I.

ON SELECT PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE.

GENESIS.

HYMN I.

Adam. Chap. iii.

1 On man, in his own image made,
How much did God bestow!
The whole creation homage paid,
And own'd him Lord below.

2 He dwelt in Eden's garden, stor'd
With sweets for every sense;
And there, with his descending Lord,
He walk'd in confidence.

3 But oh! by sin how quickly chang'd!
His honour forfeited,
His heart from God and truth estrang'd,
His conscience fill'd with dread!

4 Now from his Maker's voice he flees,
Which was before his joy,
And thinks to hide, amidst the trees,
From an all-seeing eye.

5 Compell'd to answer to his name,
With stubbornness and pride,
He cast on God himself the blame,
Nor once for mercy cried.

6 But grace, unask'd, his heart subdu'd,
And all his guilt forgave;
By faith the promis'd Seed he view'd,
And felt his power to save.

7 Thus we ourselves would justify,
Though we the law transgress;
Like him, unable to deny,
Unwilling to confess.

8 But when, by faith, the sinner sees
A pardon, bought with blood,
Then he forsakes his foolish pleas,
And gladly turns to God.

HYMN II.

Cain and Abel. Chap. iv. 3—8.

1 When Adam fell, he quickly lost
God's image, which he once possess'd:
See all our nature since could boast,
In Cain, his first-born son, express'd!

2 The sacrifice the Lord ordain'd,
In type of the Redeemer's blood,
Self-righteous reas'ning Cain disdain'd,
And thought his own first-fruits as good.

3 Yet rage and envy fill'd his mind,
When, with a sullen downcast look,
He saw his brother favour find,
Who God's appointed method took.

4 By Cain's own hand good Abel died,
Because the Lord approv'd his faith;
And when his blood for vengeance cried,
He vainly thought to hide his death.

5 Such was the wicked murd'rer Cain;
And such by nature still are we,
Until by grace we 're born again,
Malicious, blind, and proud as he.

6 Like him, the way of grace we slight,
And in our own devices trust;
Call evil good, and darkness light,
And hate and persecute the just.

7 The saints in ev'ry age and place,
Have found his history fulfill'd;
The numbers all our thoughts surpass,
Of Abels whom the Cains have kill'd.*

8 Thus Jesus fell—but, oh! his blood
For better things than Abel's cries;†
Obtains his murd'rers peace with God,
And gains them mansions in the skies.

* Rom. viii. 36. † Heb. xii. 24.

HYMN III.

Walking with God. Chap. v. 24.

1 OH! for a closer walk with God,
A calm and heavenly frame;
A light to shine upon the road
That leads me to the Lamb!

2 Where is the blessedness I knew,
When first I saw the Lord!
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and his word!

3 What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!
How sweet their mem'ry still!
But they have left an aching void,
The world can never fill.

4 Return, O holy Dove, return,
Sweet messenger of rest;
I hate the sins that made thee mourn,
And drove thee from my breast:

5 The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from thy throne,
And worship only thee.

6 So shall my walk be close with God,
Calm and serene my frame;
So purer light shall mark the road,
That leads me to the Lamb. C.

HYMN IV.

ANOTHER.

1 BY faith in Christ I walk with God,
With heaven, my journey's end, in view;
Supported by his staff and rod,*
My road is safe and pleasant too.

2 I travel through a desert wide,
Where many round me blindly stray;
But he vouchsafes to be my guide,†
And will not let me miss my way.

3 Though snares and dangers throng my path,
And earth and hell my course withstand,
I triumph over all by faith,‡
Guarded by his almighty hand.

4 The wilderness affords no food,
But God for my support prepares;
Provides me every needful good,
And frees my soul from wants and cares.

5 With him sweet converse I maintain,
Great as he is, I dare be free;
Tell him all my grief and pain,
And he reveals his love to me.

6 Some cordial from his word he brings,
Whene'er my feeble spirit faints;
At once my soul revives and sings,
And yields no more to sad complaints.

7 I pity all that worldlings talk
Of pleasures that will quickly end:
Be this my choice, O Lord, to walk
With thee, my guide, my guard, my friend!

* Psal. xxiii. 4. † Psal. cvii. ‡ Psal. xxvii. 1, 2.

HYMN V.

Lot in Sodom. Chap. xiii. 10.

1 How hurtful was the choice of Lot,
Who took up his abode
(Because it was a fruitful spot)
With them who fear'd not God!

2 A pris'ner he was quickly made,
Bereav'd of all his store;
And, but for Abram's timely aid,
He had return'd no more.

3 Yet still he seem'd resolv'd to stay,
As if it were his rest;
Although their sins from day to day§
His righteous soul distress'd.

4 A while he stayed, with anxious mind,
Expos'd to scorn and strife;
At last he left his all behind,
And fled to save his life.

5 In vain his sons-in-law he warn'd,
They thought he told but dreams;
His daughters, too, of them had learn'd,
And perish'd in the flames.

6 His wife escap'd a little way,
But died for looking back:
Does not her case to pilgrims say,
"Beware of growing slack!"

7 Yea, Lot himself could ling'ring stand,
Though vengeance was in view;
'Twas mercy pluck'd him by the hand,
Or he had perish'd too.

8 The doom of Sodom will be ours,
If to the earth we cleave:
Lord, quicken all our drowsy powers,
To flee to thee, and live.

HYMN VI.

Jehovah-Jireh; or, the Lord will provide. Chap. xxii. 14.

1 THE saints should never be dismayed,
Nor sink in hopeless fear:
For when they least expect his aid,
The Saviour will appear.

2 This Abram found—he rais'd the knife,
God saw, and said, "Forbear:
Yon ram shall yield his meaner life;
Behold the victim there!"

3 Once David seem'd Saul's certain prey;
But hark! the foe's at hand;‖
Saul turns his arms another way,
To save the invaded land.

4 When Jonah sunk beneath the wave,
He thought to rise no more;¶
But God prepar'd a fish to save,
And bear him to the shore.

§ 2 Pet. ii. 8. ‖ 1 Sam. xxiii. 7 ¶ Jonah i. 17.

5 Bless'd proofs of power and grace divine,
That meet us in his word!
May ev'ry deep-felt care of mine
Be trusted with the Lord.

6 Wait for his seasonable aid,
And though it tarry, wait;
The promise may be long delayed,
But cannot come too late. C.

HYMN VII.

ANOTHER.

1 THOUGH troubles assail,
And dangers affright,
Though friends should all fail,
And foes all unite;
Yet one thing secures us,
Whatever betide,
The scripture assures us,
The LORD will provide.

2 The birds without barn
Or storehouse are fed;
From them let us learn
To trust for our bread:
His saints, what is fitting,
Shall ne'er be denied,
So long as 'tis written,
The LORD will provide.

3 We may, like the ships,
By tempests be tossed,
On perilous deeps,
But cannot be lost:
Though Satan enrages
The wind and the tide,
The promise engages,
The LORD will provide.

4 His call we obey,
Like Abram of old,
Not knowing our way,
But faith makes us bold;
For though we are strangers,
We have a good guide,
And trust in all dangers,
The LORD will provide.

5 When Satan appears
To stop up our path,
And fill us with fears,
We triumph by faith;
He cannot take from us,
Though oft he has tried,
This heart-cheering promise,
The LORD will provide.

6 He tells us we're weak,
Our hope is in vain,
The good that we seek
We ne'er shall obtain;
But when such suggestions
Our spirits have plied,
This answers all questions,
The LORD will provide.

7 No strength of our own,
Or goodness we claim;
Yet since we have known
The Saviour's great name,
In this our strong tower
For safety we hide,
The Lord is our power,
The LORD will provide.

8 When life sinks apace,
And death is in view,
This word of his grace
Shall comfort us through;
No fearing or doubting,
With Christ on our side,
We hope to die shouting,
The LORD will provide.

HYMN VIII.

Esau. Chap. xxv. 34. Heb. xii. 16.

1 POOR Esau repented too late,
That once he his birth-right despis'd,
And sold for a morsel of meat,
What could not too highly be priz'd:
How great was his anguish when told,
The blessing he sought to obtain,
Was gone with the birth-right he sold,
And none could recall it again!

2 He stands as a warning to all,
Wherever the gospel shall come;
O hasten and yield to the call,
While yet for repentance there's room!
Your season will quickly be past;
Then hear and obey it to-day,
Lest when you seek mercy at last,
The Saviour should frown you away

3 What is it the world can propose?
A morsel of meat at the best!
For this are you willing to lose
A share in the joys of the blest?
Its pleasures will speedily end,
Its favour and praise are but breath;
And what can its profits befriend
Your soul in the moment of death?

4 If Jesus, for these, you despise,
And sin to the Saviour prefer;
In vain your entreaties and cries,
When summoned to stand at his bar:
How will you his presence abide?
What anguish will torture your heart?
The saints all enthron'd by his side,
And you be compell'd to depart.

5 Too often, dear Saviour, have I
Preferr'd some poor trifle to thee;
How is it thou dost not deny
The blessing and birth-right to me?
No better than Esau I am,
Though pardon and heaven be mine;
To me belongs nothing but shame;
The praise and the glory be thine.

HYMN IX.

Jacob's Ladder. Chap. xxviii. 12.

1 If the Lord our leader be,
We may follow without fear;
East or west, by land or sea,
Home with him, is ev'ry where.
When from Esau Jacob fled,
Though his pillow was of stone,
And the ground his humble bed,
Yet he was not left alone.

2 Kings are often waking kept,
Rack'd with cares on beds of state;
Never king like Jacob slept,
For he lay at heaven's gate;
Lo! he saw a ladder rear'd
Reaching to the heavenly throne;
At the top the Lord appear'd,
Spake, and claim'd him for his own.

3 "Fear not, Jacob, thou art mine,
And my presence with thee goes:
On thy heart my love shall shine,
And my arm subdue thy foes:
From my promise comfort take,
For my help in trouble call;
Never will I thee forsake,
Till I have accomplish'd all."

4 Well does Jacob's ladder suit,
To the gospel-throne of grace;
We are at the ladder's foot,
Ev'ry hour, in ev'ry place:
By assuming flesh and blood,
Jesus heaven and earth unites;
We by faith ascend to God,*
God to dwell with us delights.

5 They who know the Saviour's name,
Are for all events prepar'd;
What can changes do to them,
Who have such a guide and guard?
Should they traverse earth around,
To the ladder still they come;
Ev'ry spot is holy ground,
God is there—and he 's their home.

HYMN X.

My name is Jacob. Chap. xxxii. 27.

1 Nay, I cannot let thee go,
Till a blessing thou bestow;
Do not turn away thy face,
Mine 's an urgent pressing case.

2 Dost thou ask me who I am?
Ah! my Lord, thou know'st my name;
Yet the question gives a plea,
To support my suit with thee.

3 Thou didst once a wretch behold,
In rebellion blindly bold,
Scorn thy grace, thy power defy;
That poor rebel, Lord, was I.

4 Once a sinner near despair,
Sought thy mercy-seat by prayer;
Mercy heard and set him free;
Lord that mercy came to me.

5 Many years have pass'd since then,
Many changes I have seen,
Yet have been upheld till now:
Who could hold me up but thou?

6 Thou hast help'd in ev'ry need;
This emboldens me to plead:
After so much mercy past,
Canst thou let me sink at last?

7 No—I must maintain my hold;
'Tis thy goodness makes me bold;
I can no denial take,
When I plead for Jesus' sake.

* 2 Cor. vi. 16.

HYMN XI.

Plenty in the Time of Dearth. Chap. xli. 56.

1 My soul once had its plenteous years,
And throve, with peace and comfort fill'd;
Like the fat kine and ripen'd ears,
Which Pharaoh in his dream beheld.

2 With pleasing frames and grace receiv'd,
With means and ordinances fed,
How happy for a while I liv'd,
And little fear'd the want of bread.

3 But famine came, and left no sign
Of all the plenty I had seen;
Like the dry ears and half-starv'd kine,
I then look'd wither'd, faint, and lean.

4 To Joseph the Egyptians went;
To Jesus I made known my case;
He, when my little stock was spent,
Open'd his magazine of grace.

5 For he the time of dearth foresaw,
And made provision long before:
That famish'd souls, like me, might draw
Supplies from his unbounded store.

6 Now on his bounty I depend,
And live from fear of dearth secure;
Maintain'd by such a mighty friend,
I cannot want till he is poor.

7 O sinners, hear his gracious call!
His mercy's door stands open wide;
He has enough to feed you all,
And none who come shall be denied.

HYMN XII.

Joseph made known to his Brethren. Chap. xlv. 3, 4.

1 When Joseph his brethren beheld
Afflicted, and trembling with fear,
His heart with compassion was fill'd,
From weeping he could not forbear.
A while his behaviour was rough,
To bring their past sin to their mind;
But when they were humbled enough,
He hastened to show himself kind.

2 How little they thought it was he,
Whom they had ill-treated and sold!
How great their confusion must be,
As soon as his name he had told!
"I 'm Joseph your brother," he said,
"And still to my heart you are dear;
You sold me, and thought I was dead,
But God, for your sakes, sent me here."

3 Though greatly distressed before,
When charg'd with purloining the cup,
They now were confounded much more,
Not one of them durst to look up.
"Can Joseph, whom we would have slain,
Forgive us the evil we did?
And will he our household maintain?
O, this is a brother indeed!"

4 Thus dragg'd by my conscience, I came,
And laden with guilt, to the Lord,
Surrounded with terror and shame,
Unable to utter a word.
At first he look'd stern and severe,
What anguish then pierced my heart!
Expecting each moment to hear
The sentence "Thou cursed depart!"

5 But, oh! what surprise when he spoke,
While tenderness beam'd in his face;
My heart then to pieces was broke,
O'erwhelmed and confounded by grace:
"Poor sinner, I know thee full well,
By thee I was sold and was slain;
But I died to redeem thee from hell,
And raise thee in glory to reign.

6 "I'm Jesus, whom thou hast blasphem'd,
And crucified often afresh;
But let me henceforth be esteem'd
Thy brother, thy bone, and thy flesh:
My pardon I freely bestow,
Thy wants I will fully supply;
I'll guide thee and guard thee below,
And soon will remove thee on high.

7 "Go, publish to sinners around,
That they may be willing to come,
The mercy which now you have found,
And tell them that yet there is room."
O sinners! the message obey,
No more vain excuses pretend;
But come without further delay,
To Jesus our brother and friend.

EXODUS.

HYMN XIII.

The bitter Waters. Chap. xv. 23. 25.

1 Bitter, indeed, the waters are,
Which in this desert flow;
Though to the eye they promise fair,
They taste of sin and woe.

2 Of pleasing draughts I once could dream,
But now awake, I find
That sin has poison'd ev'ry stream,
And left a curse behind.

3 But there 's a wonder-working wood,
I've heard believers say,
Can make these bitter waters good,
And take the curse away.

4 The virtues of this healing tree
Are known and priz'd by few;
Reveal this secret, Lord, to me,
That I may prize it too.

5 The cross on which the Saviour died,
And conquer'd for his saints;
This is the tree, by faith applied,
Which sweetens all complaints.

6 Thousands have found the bless'd effect,
No longer mourn their lot:
While on his sorrows they reflect,
Their own are all forgot.

7 When they, by faith, behold the cross,
Though many griefs they meet;
They draw again from ev'ry loss,
And find the bitter sweet.

HYMN XIV.

Jehovah-Rophi; or, the Lord my Healer Chap. xv. 26.

1 Heal us, Emmanuel, here we are,
Waiting to feel thy touch;
Deep-wounded souls to thee repair,
And Saviour we are such.

2 Our faith is feeble, we confess,
We faintly trust thy word;
But wilt thou pity us the less?
Be that far from thee, Lord!

3 Remember him who once applied
With trembling for relief;
"Lord, I believe," with tears he cried,*
"O help my unbelief!"

4 She too who touch'd thee in the press,
And healing virtue stole,
Was answered, "Daughter go in peace,
Thy faith hath made the whole."†

5 Conceal'd amid the gathering throng,
She would have shunn'd thy view;
And if her faith was firm and strong,
Had strong misgivings too.

6 Like her, with hopes and fears, we come,
To touch thee if we may;
Oh! send us not despairing home,
Send none unheal'd away! C.

HYMN XV.

Manna. Chap. xvi. 18.

1 Manna to Israel well supplied
The want of other bread;
While God is able to provide,
His people shall be fed.

2 Thus, though the corn and wine should fail,
And creature-streams be dry,
The prayer of faith will still prevail,
For blessings from on high.

* Mark ix. 24. † Mark v. 34.

3 Of this kind care how sweet a proof!
It suited ev'ry taste;
Who gather'd most had just enough,
Enough who gather'd least.

4 'Tis thus our gracious Lord divides
Our comforts and our cares;
His own unerring hand provides,
And gives us each our shares.

5 He knows how much the weak can bear,
And helps them when they cry;
The strongest have no strength to spare,
For such he 'll strongly try.

6 Daily they saw the manna come,
And cover all the ground;
But what they tried to keep at home,
Corrupted soon was found.

7 Vain their attempt to store it up,
This was to tempt the Lord;
Israel must live by faith and hope,
And not upon a hoard.

HYMN XVI.

Manna Hoarded. Chap. xvi. 20.

1 THE manna, favour'd Israel's meat,
Was gather'd day by day;
When all the host was serv'd, the heat
Melted the rest away.

2 In vain to hoard it up they tried,
Against to-morrow came;
It then bred worms and putrified,
And prov'd their sin and shame.

3 'Twas daily bread, and would not keep,
But must be still renew'd;
Faith should not want a hoard or heap,
But trust the Lord for food.

4 The truths by which the soul is fed,
Must thus be had afresh;
For notions resting in the head
Will only feed the flesh.

5 However true they have no life
Or unction to impart;
They breed the worms of pride and strife,
But cannot cheer the heart.

6 Nor can the best experience past
The life of faith maintain;
The brightest hope will faint at last,
Unless supplied again.

7 Dear Lord, while we in prayer are found,
Do thou the manna give;
Oh! let it fall on all around,
That we may eat and live!

HYMN XVII.

Jehovah-Nissi; or, the Lord my Banner. Chap. xvii. 15.

1 BY whom was David taught
To aim the dreadful blow,
When he Goliah fought,
And laid the Gittite low?
No sword nor spear the stripling took,
But chose a pebble from the brook.

2 'Twas Israel's God and King
Who sent him to the fight;
Who gave him strength to sling,
And skill to aim aright.
Ye feeble saints, your strength endures,
Because young David's God is yours.

3 Who order'd Gideon forth
To storm the invader's camp,*
With arms of little worth,
A pitcher and a lamp?
The trumpets made his coming known,
And all the host was overthrown.

4 Oh! I have seen the day,
When with a single word,
God helping me to say,
My trust is in the Lord,
My soul has quell'd a thousand foes,
Fearless of all that could oppose.

5 But unbelief, self-will,
Self-righteousness, and pride,
How often do they steal
My weapon from my side?
Yet David's Lord, and Gideon's friend,
Will help his servant to the end. C.

HYMN XVIII.

The golden Calf. Chap. xxxii. 4. 21.

1 WHEN Israel heard the fiery law
From Sinai's top proclaim'd,
Their hearts seem'd full of holy awe,
Their stubborn spirits tam'd.

2 Yet, as forgetting all they knew,
Ere forty days were past,
With blazing Sinai still in view,
A molten calf they cast.

3 Yea, Aaron, God's anointed priest,
Who on the mount had been,
He durst prepare the idol beast,
And lead them on to sin.

4 Lord, what is man, and what are we,
To recompense thee thus!
In their offence our own we see,
Their story points at us.

5 From Sinai's top we heard thee speak,
And from mount Calv'ry too;
And yet to idols oft we seek,
While thou art in our view.

6 Some golden calf, or golden dream,
Some fancied creature good,
Presumes to share the heart with him
Who bought the whole with blood.

7 Lord, save us from our golden calves,
Our sin with grief we own;
We would no more be thine by halves,
But live to thee alone.

* Judges vii. 20.

LEVITICUS.

HYMN XIX.

The true Aaron. Chap. viii. 7—9.

1 See Aaron, God's anointed priest,
Within the vail appear,
In robes of mystic meaning drest,
Presenting Israel's prayer.

2 The plate of gold which crowns his brows
His holiness describes;
His breast displays, in shining rows,
The names of all the tribes.

3 With the atoning blood he stands
Before the mercy-seat;
And clouds of incense from his hands
Arise with odour sweet.

4 Urim and Thummim near his heart,
In rich engravings worn,
The sacred light of truth impart,
To teach and to adorn.

5 Through him the eye of faith descries
A greater priest than he:
Thus Jesus pleads above the skies,
For you, my friends, and me.

6 He bears the names of all his saints
Deep on his heart engrav'd;
Attentive to the state and wants
Of all his love has saved.

7 In him a holiness complete,
Light and perfections shine,
And wisdom, grace, and glory meet;
A Saviour all divine!

8 The blood, which as a priest he bears
For sinners, is his own:
The incense of his prayers and tears
Perfume the holy throne.

9 In him my weary soul has rest,
Though I am weak and vile,
I read my name upon his breast,
And see the Father smile.

NUMBERS.

HYMN XX.

*Balaam's Wish.** Chap. xxiii. 10.

1 How bless'd the righteous are,
When they resign their breath;
No wonder Balaam wish'd to share
In such a happy death.

2 "Oh! let me die," said he,
"The death the righteous do;
When life is ended, let me be
Found with the faithful few."

3 The force of truth, how great!
When enemies confess,
None but the righteous, whom they hate,
A solid hope possess.

4 But Balaam's wish was vain,
His heart was insincere;
He thirsted for unrighteous gain,
And sought a portion here.

5 He seem'd the Lord to know,
And to offend him loth;
But Mammon prov'd his overthrow;
For none can serve them both.

6 May you, my friends, and I,
Warning from hence receive;
If like the righteous we would die,
To choose the life they live.

JOSHUA.

HYMN XXI.

Gibeon. Chap. x. 6.

1 When Joshua, by God's command,
Invaded Canaan's guilty land,
Gibeon, unlike the nations round,
Submission made, and mercy found.

2 Their stubborn neighbours, who, enrag'd,
United war against them wag'd,
By Joshua soon were overthrown,
For Gibeon's cause was now his own.

3 He from whose arm they ruin fear'd,
Their leader and ally appear'd;
An emblem of the Saviour's grace,
To those who humbly seek his face.

4 The men of Gibeon wore disguise,
And gain'd their peace by framing lies;
For Joshua had no power to spare,
If he had known from whence they were.

5 But Jesus invitation sends,
Treating with rebels as his friends;
And holds the promise forth in view,
To all who for his mercy sue.

6 Too long his goodness I disdain'd,
Yet went at last, and peace obtained;
But soon the noise of war I heard,
And former friends in arms appear'd.

7 Weak in myself, for help I cried,
Lord, I am press'd on every side;
The cause is thine, they fight with me,
But every blow is aimed at thee.

8 With speed to my relief he came,
And put my enemies to shame:
Thus sav'd by grace, I live to sing
The love and triumphs of my King.

JUDGES.

HYMN XXII.

Jehovah-Shalom; or, the Lord is Peace. Chap. vi. 24.

1 Jesus, whose blood so freely stream'd,
To satisfy the law's demand,
By thee from guilt and wrath redeem'd,
Before the Father's face I stand.

* Book III. Hymn lxxi.

2 To reconcile offending man,
Make Justice drop her angry rod;
What creature could have form'd the plan,
Or who fulfil it, but a God!

3 No drop remains of all the curse,
For wretches who deserv'd the whole;
No arrows dipt in wrath to pierce
The guilty, but returning soul.

4 Peace by such means so dearly bought,
What rebel could have hop'd to see?
Peace, by his injur'd Sovereign wrought,
His Sovereign fastened to the tree.

5 Now, Lord, thy feeble worm prepare!
For strife with earth and hell begins;
Confirm and gird me for the war,
They hate the soul that hates his sins.

6 Let them in horrid league agree!
They may assault, they may distress;
But cannot quench thy love to me,
Nor rob me of the Lord, my peace. C.

HYMN XXIII.

Gideon's Fleece. Chap. vi. 37—40.

1 THE signs which God to Gideon gave
His holy sovereignty made known,
That he alone has power to save,
And claims the glory as his own.

2 The dew which first the fleece had fill'd,
When all the earth was dry around,
Was from it afterwards withheld,
And only fell upon the ground.

3 To Israel thus the heavenly dew
Of saving truth was long restrain'd;
Of which the Gentiles nothing knew,
But dry and desolate remain'd.

4 But now the Gentiles have receiv'd
The balmy dew of gospel-peace;
And Israel, who his Spirit griev'd,
Is left a dry and empty fleece.

5 This dew still falls at his command,
To keep his chosen plants alive;
They shall, though in a thirsty land,
"Like willows by the waters thrive."*

6 But chiefly when his people meet,
To hear his word and seek his face,
The gentle dew, with influence sweet,
Descends, and nourishes their grace.

7 But, ah! what numbers still are dead,
Though under means of grace they lie!
The dew still falling round their head,
And yet their heart untouch'd and dry.

8 Dear Saviour! hear us when we call,
To wrestling prayer an answer give;
Pour down thy dew upon us all,
That all may feel, and all may live.

HYMN XXIV.

Samson's Lion. Chap. xiv. 8.

1 THE lion that on Samson roar'd,
And thirsted for his blood,
With honey afterwards was stor'd,
And furnish'd him with food.

2 Believers, as they pass along,
With many lions meet,
But gather sweetness from the strong,
And from the eater meat.

3 The lions rage and roar in vain,
For Jesus is their shield;
Their losses prove a certain gain,
Their troubles comfort yield.

4 The world and Satan join their strength,
To fill their souls with fears;
But crops of Joy they reap at length,
From what they sow in tears.

5 Afflictions make them love the word,
Stir up their hearts to prayer,
And many precious fruits afford
Of their Redeemer's care.

6 The lions roar, but cannot kill;
Then fear them not, my friends,
They bring us, though against their will,
The honey Jesus sends.

* Isa. xliv. 4.

I. SAMUEL.

HYMN XXV.

Hannah; or, The Throne of Grace. Chap. i. 18.

1 WHEN Hannah, press'd with grief,
Pour'd forth her soul in prayer,
She quickly found relief,
And left her burden there:
Like her, in ev'ry trying case,
Let us approach the throne of grace.

2 When she began to pray,
Her heart was pain'd and sad;
But ere she went away,
Was comforted and glad:
In trouble what a resting-place
Have they who know the throne of grace;

3 Though men and devils rage,
And threaten to devour,
The saints, from age to age,
Are safe from all their power;
Fresh strength they gain to run their race,
By waiting at the throne of grace.

4 Eli her case mistook;
How was her spirit mov'd
By his unkind rebuke!
But God her cause approv'd.
We need not fear a creature's face,
While welcome at a throne of grace.

5 She was not fill'd with wine,
As Eli rashly thought;
But with a faith divine,
And found the help she sought:
Though men despise and call us base,
Still let us ply the throne of grace.

6 Men have not power or skill
With troubled souls to bear;

Though they express good-will,
Poor comforters they are:
But swelling sorrows sink apace,
When we approach the throne of grace.

7 Numbers before have tried,
And found the promise true;
Nor yet one been denied,
Then why should I or you?
Let us by faith their footsteps trace,
And hasten to the throne of grace.

8 As fogs obscure the light,
And taint the morning air,
But soon are put to flight,
If the bright sun appear:
Thus Jesus will our troubles chase,
By shining from the throne of grace.*

HYMN XXVI.

Dagon before the Ark. Chap. v. 4, 5.

1 When first to make my heart his own,
The Lord reveal'd his mighty grace;
Self reigned like Dagon on the throne,
But could not long maintain its place.

2 It fell, and own'd the power divine,
(Grace can with ease the victory gain)
But soon this wretched heart of mine
Contriv'd to set it up again.

3 Again the Lord his name proclaimed,
And brought the hateful idol low;
Then self, like Dagon, broken, maimed,
Seemed to receive a mortal blow.

4 Yet self is not of life bereft,
Nor ceases to oppose his will;
Though but a maimed stump be left
'Tis Dagon, 'tis an idol still.

5 Lord, must I always guilty prove,
And idols in my heart have room?†
Oh! let the fire of heavenly love
The very stump of self consume!

HYMN XXVII.

The Milch-kine Drawing the Ark:—Faith's Surrender of all. Chap. vi. 12.

1 The kine unguided went
By the direetest road,
When the Philistines homeward sent
The ark of Israel's God.

2 Lowing they passed along,
And left their calves shut up;
They felt an instinct for their young
But would not turn or stop.

3 Shall brutes, devoid of thought,
Their Maker's will obey,
And we who by his grace are taught,
More stubborn prove than they?

4 He shed his precious blood,
To make us his alone;
If wash'd in that atoning flood,
We are no more our own.

5 If he his will reveal,
Let us obey his call;
And think, whate'er the flesh may feel,
His love deserves our all.

6 We should maintain in view
His glory, as our end;
Too much we cannot bear or do,
For such a matchless friend.

7 His saints should stand prepared
In duty's path to run;
Nor count their greatest trials hard,
So that his will be done.

8 With Jesus for our guide,
The path is safe, though rough;
The promise says, "I will provide,"
And faith replies, "Enough."

HYMN XXVIII.

Saul's Armour. Chap. xvii. 38—40.

1 When first my soul enlisted
My Saviour's foes to fight,
Mistaken friends insisted
I was not arm'd aright.
So Saul advised David,
He certainly would fail,
Nor could his life be saved,
Without a coat of mail.

2 But David, though he yielded
To put the armour on,
Soon found he could not wield it,
And ventur'd forth with none.
With only sling and pebble,
He fought the fight of faith;
The weapons seem'd but feeble,
Yet prov'd Goliah's death.

3 Had I by him been guided,
And quickly thrown away
The armour men provided,
I might have gain'd the day;
But arm'd as they advis'd me,
My expectations fail'd;
My enemy surpris'd me,
And had almost prevail'd.

4 Furnish'd with books and notions,
And arguments and pride,
I practis'd all my motions,
And Satan's pow'r defied;
But soon perceiv'd with trouble,
That these would do no good;
Iron to him is stubble,‡
And brass like rotten wood.

5 I triumph'd at a distance,
While he was out of sight;
But faint was my resistance,
When fore'd to join in fight:
He broke my sword in shivers,
And pierc'd my boasted shield;
Laugh'd at my vain endeavours,
And drove me from the field.

* Book II. Hymn lxi. † Hosea xiv. 8. ‡ Job xli. 27.

6 Satan will not be braved
By such a worm as I;
Then let me learn, with David,
To trust in the Most High;
To plead the name of Jesus,
And use the sling of prayer;
Thus arm'd, when Satan sees us,
He 'll tremble and despair.

II. SAMUEL.

HYMN XXIX.

David's Fall. Chap. xi. 27.

1 How David, when by sin deceiv'd,
From bad to worse went on!
For when the Holy Spirit 's griev'd,
Our strength and guard are gone.

2 His eye on Bathsheba once fix'd,
With poison fill'd his soul;
He ventur'd on adult'ry next,
And murder crown'd the whole.

3 So from a spark of fire at first,
That has not been descried,
A dreadful flame has often burst,
And ravag'd far and wide.

4 When sin deceives, it hardens too,
For though he vainly sought
To hide his crimes from public view,
Of God he little thought.

5 He neither would nor could repent,
No true compunction felt;
Till God in mercy Nathan sent,
His stubborn heart to melt.

6 The parable held forth a fact,
Design'd his case to show;
But though the picture was exact,
Himself he did not know.

7 "Thou art the man," the prophet said,
That word his slumber broke;
And when he own'd his sin, and prayed,
The Lord forgiveness spoke.

8 Let those who think they stand beware,
For David stood before;
Nor let the fallen soul despair,
For mercy can restore.

HYMN XXX.

Is this thy Kindness to thy Friend? Chap. xvi. 17.

1 Poor, weak, and worthless though I am,
I have a rich almighty Friend;
Jesus, the Saviour, is his name;
He freely loves, and without end.

2 He ransom'd me from hell with blood,
And by his power my foes control'd;
He found me, wand'ring far from God,
And brought me to his chosen fold.

3 He cheers my heart, my want supplies,
And says that I shall shortly be
Enthron'd with him above the skies,
Oh! what a friend is Christ to me,

4 But, ah! my inmost spirit mourns,
And well my eyes with tears may swim,
To think of my perverse returns;
I 've been a faithless friend to him.

5 Often my gracious Friend I grieve,
Neglect, distrust, and disobey,
And often Satan's lies believe,
Sooner than all my Friend can say.

6 He bids me always freely come,
And promises whate'er I ask;
But I am straiten'd, cold, and dumb,
And count my privilege a task.

7 Before the world, that hates his cause,
My treach'rous heart has throbb'd with shame;
Loth to forego the world's applause,
I hardly dare avow his name.

8 Sure, were not I most vile and base,
I could not thus my Friend requite!
And were not he the God of grace,
He'd frown, and spurn me from his sight.

I. KINGS.

HYMN XXXI.

Ask what I shall give Thee. Chap. iii. 5.

1 Come, my soul, thy suit prepare,
Jesus loves to answer prayer;
He himself has bid thee pray,
Therefore will not say thee nay.

2 Thou art coming to a King,*
Large petitions with thee bring;
For his grace and power are such,
None can ever ask too much.

3 With my burden I begin,
Lord, remove this load of sin!
Let thy blood, for sinners spilt,
Set my conscience free from guilt.

4 Lord, I come to thee for rest,
Take possession of my breast;
There thy blood-bought right maintain,
And without a rival reign.

5 As the image in the glass
Answers the beholder's face;
Thus unto my heart appear,
Print thine own resemblance there.

6 While I am a pilgrim here,
Let thy love my spirit cheer;
As my Guide, my Guard, my Friend,
Lead me to my journey's end.

7 Show me what I have to do,
Ev'ry hour my strength renew;
Let me live a life of faith,
Let me die thy people's death.

* Psalm lxxxi. 10.

HYMN XXXII.

ANOTHER.

1 If Solomon for wisdom prayed,
The Lord before had made him wise,
Else he another choice had made,
And ask'd for what the worldlings prize.

2 Thus he invites his people still;
He first instructs them how to choose,
Then bids them ask whate'er they will,
Assur'd that he will not refuse.

3 Our wishes would our ruin prove,
Could we our wretched choice obtain,
Before we feel the Saviour's love
Kindle our love to him again.

4 But when our hearts perceive his worth,
Desires, till then unknown, take place;
Our spirits cleave no more to earth,
But pant for holiness and grace.

5 And dost thou say, "Ask what thou wilt?"
Lord, I would seize the golden hour;
I pray to be releas'd from guilt,
And freed from sin and Satan's power.

6 More of thy presence, Lord, impart,
More of thine image let me bear;
Erect thy throne within my heart,
And reign without a rival there.

7 Give me to read my pardon seal'd,
And from thy joy to draw my strength;
To have thy boundless love reveal'd,
In all its height, and breadth, and length.

8 Grant these requests, I ask no more,
But to thy care the rest resign;
Sick, or in health, or rich, or poor,
All shall be well if thou art mine.

HYMN XXXIII.

ANOTHER.

1 Behold the throne of grace!
The promise calls me near;
There Jesus shows a smiling face,
And waits to answer prayer.

2 That rich atoning blood,
Which sprinkled round I see,
Provides for those who come to God,
An all-prevailing plea.

3 My soul, ask what thou wilt,
Thou canst not be too bold;
Since his own blood for thee he spilt,
What else can he withhold?

4 Beyond thy utmost wants,
His love and power can bless:
To praying souls he always grants
More than they can express.

5 Since 'tis the Lord's command,
My mouth I open wide;
Lord, open thou thy bounteous hand,
That I may be supplied.

6 Thine image, Lord, bestow,
Thy presence and thy love,
I ask to serve thee here below,
And reign with thee above.

7 Teach me to live by faith,
Conform my will to thine;
Let me victorious be in death,
And then in glory shine.

8 If thou these blessings give,
And wilt my portion be,
Cheerful the world's poor toys I leave
To them who know not thee.

HYMN XXXIV.

The Queen of Sheba. Chap. x. 1—9.

1 From Sheba a distant report,
Of Solomon's glory and fame,
Invited the queen to his court,
But all was outdone when she came;
She cried, with a pleasing surprise,
When first she before him appear'd,
"How much what I see with my eyes,
Surpasses the rumour I heard!"

2 When once to Jerusalem come,
The treasure and train she had brought,
The wealth she possessed at home,
No longer had place in her thought;
His house, his attendants, his throne,
All struck her with wonder and awe:
The glory of Solomon shone
In every object she saw.

3 But Solomon most she admir'd,
Whose spirit conducted the whole;
His wisdom, which God had inspir'd,
His bounty and greatness of soul;
Of all the hard questions she put,
A ready solution he showed;
Exceeded her wish and her suit,
And more than she ask'd him bestowed.

4 Thus I, when the gospel proclaim'd
The Saviour's great name in my ears,
The wisdom for which he is fam'd,
The love which to sinners he bears;
I long'd, and I was not denied,
That I in his presence might bow;
"I saw, and transported I cried,
"A greater than Solomon thou!"

5 My conscience no comfort could find,
By doubts and hard questions opposed;
But he restor'd peace to my mind,
And answer'd each doubt I proposed,
Beholding me poor and distress'd,
His bounty supplied all my wants;
My prayer could have never express'd
So much as this Solomon grants.

6 I heard, and was slow to believe,
But now with my eyes I behold,
Much more than my heart could conceive
Or language could ever have told:
How happy thy servants must be,
Who always before thee appear!
Vouchsafe, Lord, this blessing to me,
I find it is good to be here.

HYMN XXXV.

*Elijah fed by Ravens.** Chap. xvii. 6.

1 ELIJAH's example declares,
Whatever distress may betide,
The saints may commit all their cares
To him who will surely provide:
When rain long withheld from the earth,
Occasioned a famine of bread,
The prophet, secur'd from the dearth,
By ravens was constantly fed.

2 More likely to rob than to feed,
Were ravens who live upon prey:
But when the Lord's people have need,
His goodness will find out a way.
This instance to those may seem strange,
Who know not how faith can prevail;
But sooner all nature shall change,
Than one of God's promises fail.

3 Nor is it a singular case,
The wonder is often renew'd;
And many can say to his praise,
He sends them by ravens their food:
Thus worldlings, though ravens indeed,
Though greedy and selfish their mind,
If God has a servant to feed,
Against their own wills can be kind.

4 Thus Satan, that raven unclean,
Who croaks in the ears of the saints,
Compell'd by a power unseen,
Administers oft to their wants;
God teaches them how to find food,
From all the temptations they feel:
This raven who thirsts for my blood,
Has help'd me to many a meal.

5 How safe and how happy are they,
Who on the good Shepherd rely!
He gives them out strength for their day,
Their wants he will surely supply;
He ravens and lions can tame,
All creatures obey his command:
Then let me rejoice in his name,
And leave all my cares in his hand.

HYMN XXXVI.

The Meal and Cruise of Oil. Chap. xvii. 16.

1 BY the poor widow's oil and meal
Elijah was sustain'd;
Though small the stock, it lasted well,
For God the store maintain'd.

2 It seem'd as if from day to day,
They were to eat and die;
But still, though in a secret way,
He sent a fresh supply.

3 Thus to his poor he still will give
Just for the present hour:
But for to-morrow they must live
Upon his word and power.

4 No barn or store-house they possess,
On which they can depend;
Yet have no cause to fear distress,
For Jesus is their friend.

5 Then let no doubt your mind assail:
Remember God has said,
"The cruise and barrel shall not fail,
My people shall be fed."

6 And thus, though faint, it often seems,
He keeps their grace alive;
Supplied by his refreshing streams,
Their dying hopes revive.

7 Though in ourselves we have no stock,
The Lord is nigh to save:
His door flies open when we knock,
And 'tis but ask and have.

* Book III. Hymn xlvii.

II. KINGS.

HYMN XXXVII.

Jericho; or, the Waters healed. Chap. ii. 19—22.

1 THOUGH Jericho pleasantly stood,
And look'd like a promising soil;
The harvest produc'd little food,
To answer the husbandman's toil.
The water some property had,
Which poisonous prov'd to the ground;
The springs were corrupted and bad,
The streams spread a barrenness round.

2 But soon by the cruise and the salt,
Prepar'd by Elijah's command,
The water was cur'd of its fault,
And plenty enriched the land:
An emblem sure this of the grace,
On fruitless dead sinners bestow'd;
For man is in Jericho's case,
Till cured by the mercy of God.

3 How noble a creature he seems!
What knowledge, invention, and skill!
How large and extensive his schemes!
How much can he do if he will!
His zeal to be learned and wise
Will yield to no limits and bars;
He measures the earth and the skies,
And numbers and marshals the stars.

4 Yet still he is barren of good;
In vain are his talents and art;
For sin has infected his blood,
And poison'd the springs of his heart:
Though cockatrice eggs he can hatch,*
Or, spider-like, cobwebs can weave;
'Tis madness to labour and watch
For what will destroy or deceive.

5 But grace, like the salt in the cruise,
When cast in the spring of the soul,
A wonderful change will produce,
Diffusing new life through the whole;
The wilderness blooms like a rose,
The heart which was vile and abhorr'd,
Now fruitful and beautiful grows,
The garden and joy of the Lord.

* Isa. lix. 5.

HYMN XXXVIII.

Naaman. Chap. v. 14.

1 Before Elisha's gate
The Syrian leper stood;
But could not brook to wait,
He deem'd himself too good:
He thought the prophet would attend,
And not to him a message send.

2 Have I this journey come,
And will he not be seen?
I were as well at home,
Would washing make me clean;
Why must I wash in Jordan's flood?
Damascus' rivers are as good.

3 Thus, by his foolish pride,
He almost miss'd a cure;
Howe'er at length he tried,
And found the method sure:
Soon as his pride was brought to yield,
The leprosy was quickly heal'd.

4 Leprous and proud as he,
To Jesus thus I came,
From sin he set me free,
When first I heard his fame;
Surely, thought I, my pompous train
Of vows and tears will notice gain.

5 My heart devis'd the way
Which I suppos'd he'd take,
And when I found delay,
Was ready to go back;
Had he some painful task enjoin'd,
I to performance seem'd inclin'd.

6 When by his word he spake,
"That fountain opened see;
'Twas opened for thy sake,
Go wash, and thou art free."
Oh! how did my proud heart gainsay;
I fear'd to trust this simple way.

7 At length I trial made,
When I had much endur'd;
The message I obeyed,
I wash'd, and I was cur'd:
Sinners, this healing fountain try,
Which cleans'd a wretch so vile as I.

HYMN XXXIX.

The borrowed Axe. Chap. vi. 5, 6.

1 The prophet's sons, in times of old,
Though to appearance poor,
Were rich, without possessing gold,
And honoured, though obscure.

2 In peace their daily bread they ate,
By honest labour earned;
While daily at Elisha's feet,
They grace and wisdom learned.

3 The prophet's presence cheer'd their toil,
They watch'd the words he spoke;
Whether they turn'd the furrow'd soil,
Or fell'd the spreading oak.

4 Once as they listened to his theme,
Their conference was stopped;
For one beneath the yielding stream,
A borrowed axe had dropped.

5 "Alas! it was not mine (he said,)
How shall I make it good?"
Elisha heard, and when he prayed,
The iron swam like wood.

6 If God, in such a small affair,
A miracle performs;
It shows his condescending care
Of poor unworthy worms.

7 Though kings and nations, in his view
Are but as motes and dust;
His eye and ear are fixed on you,
Who in his mercy trust.

8 Not one concern of ours is small,
If we belong to him;
To teach us this, the Lord of all
Once made the iron swim.

HYMN XL.

More with us than with them. Chap. vi. 16.

1 Alas! Elisha's servant cried,
When he the Syrian army spied;
But he was soon released from care,
In answer to the prophet's prayer.

2 Straightway he saw, with other eyes,
A greater army from the skies,
A fiery guard around the hill:—
Thus are the saints preserved still.

3 When Satan and his host appear,
Like him of old, I faint and fear;
Like him, by faith, with joy I see,
A greater host engaged for me.

4 The saints espouse my cause by prayer,
The angels make my soul their care;
Mine is the promise sealed with blood,
And Jesus lives to make it good.

I. CHRONICLES.

HYMN XLI.

Faith's Review and Expectation.
Chap. xvii. 16, 17.

1 Amazing grace! (how sweet the sound)
That sav'd a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

2 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fears reliev'd;
How precious did that grace appear,
The hour I first believ'd.

3 Through many dangers, toils, and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

4 The Lord has promis'd good to me,
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be,
As long as life endures.

5 Yea, when this heart and flesh shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease;
I shall possess, within the vail,
A life of joy and peace.

6 The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine;
But God, who call'd me here below,
Will be for ever mine.

NEHEMIAH.

HYMN XLII.

The Joy of the Lord is your Strength.
Chap. viii. 10.

1 Joy is a fruit that will not grow
In nature's barren soil;
All we can boast, till Christ we know,
Is vanity and toil.

2 But where the Lord has planted grace,
And made his glories known;
There fruits of heavenly joy and peace
Are found, and there alone.

3 A bleeding Saviour, seen by faith,
A sense of pard'ning love,
A hope that triumphs over death,
Give joys like those above.

4 To take a glimpse within the vail,
To know that God is mine,
Are springs of joy that never fail,
Unspeakable! divine!

5 These are the joys which satisfy,
And sanctify the mind;
Which make the spirit mount on high,
And leave the world behind.

6 No more, believers, mourn your lot,
But if you are the Lord's,
Resign to them that know him not
Such joys as earth affords.

JOB.

HYMN XLIII.

Oh that I were as in Months past.
Chap. xxix. 2.

1 SWEET was the time when first I felt
The Saviour's pard'ning blood
Applied to cleanse my soul from guilt,
And bring me home to God.

2 Soon as the morn the light reveal'd,
His praises tuned my tongue;
And when the ev'ning shades prevail'd,
His love was all my song.

3 In vain the tempter spread his wiles,
The world no more could charm;
I lived upon my Saviour's smiles,
And lean'd upon his arm.

4 In prayer my soul drew near the Lord,
And saw his glory shine;
And when I read his holy word,
I call'd each promise mine.

5 Then to his saints I often spoke
Of what his love had done;
But now my heart is almost broke,
For all my joys are gone.

6 Now, when the ev'ning shade prevails,
My soul in darkness mourns;
And when the morn the light reveals,
No light to me returns.

7 My prayers are now a chatt'ring noise,
For Jesus hides his face;
I read,—the promise meets my eyes,
But will not reach my case.

8 Now Satan threatens to prevail,
And make my soul his prey;
Yet, Lord, thy mercies cannot fail,
O come without delay!

HYMN XLIV.

*The Change.** Ibid.

1 SAVIOUR, shine, and cheer my soul,
Bid my dying hopes revive;
Make my wounded spirit whole,
Far away the tempter drive;
Speak the word, and set me free,
Let me live alone to thee.

2 Shall I sigh and pray in vain,
Wilt thou still refuse to hear;
Wilt thou not return again,
Must I yield to black despair?
Thou hast taught my heart to pray,
Canst thou turn thy face away?

3 Once I thought my mountain strong,
Firmly fix'd, no more to move;
Then thy grace was all my song,
Then my soul was fill'd with love;
Those were happy golden days,
Sweetly spent in prayer and praise.

4 When my friends have said, "Beware,
Soon or late you 'll find a change,"
I could see no cause for fear,
Vain their caution seem'd, and strange:
Not a cloud obscur'd my sky,
Could I think a tempest nigh?

5 Little, then, myself I knew,
Little thought of Satan's power;
Now I find their words were true,
Now I feel the stormy hour!
Sin has put my joys to flight,
Sin has chang'd my day to night.

6 Satan asks, and mocks my woe,
"Boaster, where is now your God;"
Silence, Lord, this cruel foe,
Let him know I 'm bought with blood:
Tell him, since I know thy name,
Though I change, thou art the same.

* Book II. Hymn xxxiv. and Book III. Hymn xxxvi.

PSALMS.

HYMN XLV.

Pleading for Mercy. Psalm vi.

1 In mercy, not in wrath, rebuke
Thy feeble worm, my God!
My spirit dreads thine angry look,
And trembles at thy rod.

2 Have mercy, Lord, for I am weak,
Regard my heavy groans;
O, let thy voice of comfort speak,
And heal my broken bones.

3 By day, my busy beating head
Is fill'd with anxious fears;
By night, upon my restless bed,
I weep a flood of tears.

4 Thus I sit desolate and mourn,
Mine eyes grow dull with grief;
How long, my Lord, ere thou return,
And bring my soul relief!

5 O, come and show thy power to save,
And spare my fainting breath;
For who can praise thee in the grave,
Or sing thy name in death?

6 Satan, my cruel envious foe,
Insults me in my pain;
He smiles to see me brought so low,
And tells me hope is vain.

7 But hence thou enemy, depart!
Nor tempt me to despair;
My Saviour comes to cheer my heart,
The Lord has heard my prayer.

HYMN XLVI.

None upon Earth I desire besides Thee.
Psalm lxxiii. 25.

1 How tedious and tasteless the hours,
When Jesus no longer I see;
Sweet prospects, sweet birds, and sweet flowers,
Have lost all their sweetness with me;
The midsummer sun shines but dim,
The fields strive in vain to look gay;
But when I am happy in him,
December's as pleasant as May.

2 His name yields the richest perfume,
And sweeter than music his voice;
His presence disperses my gloom,
And makes all within me rejoice:
I should, were he always thus nigh,
Have nothing to wish or to fear;
No mortal so happy as I,
My summer would last all the year.

3 Content with beholding his face,
My all to his pleasure resign'd,
No changes of season or place,
Would make any change in my mind:
While bless'd with a sense of his love,
A palace a toy would appear;
And prisons would palaces prove,
If Jesus would dwell with me there.

4 Dear Lord, if indeed I am thine,
If thou art my sun and my song;
Say why do I languish and pine,
And why are my winters so long?
O drive these dark clouds from my sky,
Thy soul-cheering presence restore;
Or take me unto thee on high,
Where winter and clouds are no more.

HYMN XLVII.

The Believer's Safety. Psalm xci.

1 Incarnate God! the soul that knows
Thy name's mysterious power,
Shall dwell in undisturb'd repose,
Nor fear the trying hour.

2 Thy wisdom, faithfulness, and love,
To feeble helpless worms,
A buckler and a refuge prove
From enemies and storms.

3 In vain the fowler spreads his net,
To draw them from thy care;
Thy timely call instructs their feet
To shun their artful snare.

4 When like a baneful pestilence,
Sin mows its thousands down
On ev'ry side, without defence,
Thy grace secures thine own.

5 No midnight terrors haunt their bed,
No arrow wounds by day;
Unhurt on serpents they shall tread,
If found in duty's way.

6 Angels, unseen, attend the saints,
And bear them in their arms,
To cheer their spirit when it faints,
And guard their life from harms.

7 The angels' Lord himself is nigh
To them that love his name;
Ready to save them when they cry,
And put their foes to shame.

8 Crosses and charges are their lot,
Long as they sojourn here;
But since their Saviour changes not,
What have the saints to fear?

HYMN XLVIII.

ANOTHER.

1 That man no guard or weapon needs,
Whose heart the blood of Jesus knows;
But safe may pass, if duty leads,
Through burning sands or mountain-snows

2 Releas'd from guilt, he feels no fear;
Redemption is his shield and tower:
He sees his Saviour always near,
To help in ev'ry trying hour.

3 Though I am weak, and Satan strong,
And often to assault me tries;
When Jesus is my shield and song,
Abash'd, the wolf before me flies.

4 His love possessing I am blest,
Secure whatever change may come;
Whether I go to east or west,
With him I still shall be at home.

5 If plac'd beneath the northern pole,
Though winter reigns with rigour there,
His gracious beams would cheer my soul,
And make a spring throughout the year:

6 Or if the desert's sun-burnt soil,
My lonely dwelling e'er should prove;
His presence would support my toil,
Whose smile is life, whose voice is love.

HYMN XLIX.

He led them by a right way. Psalm cvii. 7.

1 WHEN Israel was from Egypt freed,
The Lord, who brought them out,
Help'd them in ev'ry time of need,
But led them round about.*

2 To enter Canaan soon they hop'd,
But quickly chang'd their mind,
When the Red Sea their passage stopp'd,
And Pharaoh march'd behind.

3 The desert fill'd them with alarms,
For water and for food;
And Amalek, by force of arms,
To check their progress stood.

4 They often murmur'd by the way,
Because they judg'd by sight;
But were at length constrain'd to say,
The Lord had led them right.

5 In the Red Sea, that stopp'd them first,
Their enemies were drown'd;
The rocks gave water for their thirst,
And manna spread the ground.

6 By fire and cloud their way was shown
Across the pathless sands;
And Amalek was overthrown
By Moses's lifted hands.

7 The way was right their hearts to prove,
To make God's glory known;
And show his wisdom, power, and love,
Engag'd to save his own.

8 Just so, the true believer's path,
Through many dangers lies;
Though dark to sense, 'tis right to faith,
And leads us to the skies.

HYMN L.

What shall I render?† Psalm cxvi. 12, 13.

1 FOR mercies, countless as the sands,
Which daily I receive
From Jesus my Redeemer's hands,
My soul, what canst thou give?

2 Alas! from such a heart as mine,
What can I bring him forth?
My best is stain'd and dyed with sin,
My all is nothing worth.

3 Yet this acknowledgment I 'll make
For all he has bestowed,
Salvation's sacred cup I 'll take,
And call upon my God.

4 The best returns for one like me,
So wretched and so poor,
Is from his gifts to draw a plea,
And ask him still for more.

5 I cannot serve him as I ought,
No works have I to boast;
Yet would I glory in the thought,
That I shall owe him most.

HYMN LI.

Dwelling in Mesech. Psalm cxx. 5—7

1 WHAT a mournful life is mine,
Fill'd with crosses, pains, and cares!
Ev'ry work defiled with sin,
Ev'ry step beset with snares!

2 If alone I pensive sit,
I myself can hardly bear;
If I pass along the street,
Sin and riot triumph there.

3 Jesus! how my heart is pain'd,
How it mourns for souls deceiv'd!
When I hear thy name profan'd,
When I see thy Spirit griev'd.

4 When thy children's griefs I view,
Their distress becomes my own;
All I hear, or see, or do,
Makes me tremble, weep, and groan.

5 Mourning thus I long had been,
When I heard my Saviour's voice:
"Thou hast cause to mourn for sin,
But in me thou may'st rejoice."

6 This kind word dispell'd my grief,
Put to silence my complaints:
Though of sinners I am chief,
He has rank'd me with his saints.

7 Though constrain'd to dwell a while
Where the wicked strive and brawl,
Let them frown, so he but smile,
Heaven will make amends for all.

8 There, believers, we shall rest,
Free from sorrow, sin, and fears;
Nothing shall our peace molest,
Through eternal rounds of years.

9 Let us then the fight endure,
See our Captain looking down;
He will make the conquest sure,
And bestow the promis'd crown.

PROVERBS.

HYMN LII.

Wisdom. Chap. viii. 22—31.

1 ERE God had built the mountains,
Or rais'd the fruitful hills;
Before he fill'd the fountains
That feed the running rills;
In me, from everlasting,
The wonderful I AM,
Found pleasures never wasting,
And Wisdom is my name.

* Exod. xiii. 17. † Book III. Hymn lxvii.

2 When, like a tent to dwell in,
He spread the skies abroad,
And swath'd about the swelling
Of ocean's mighty flood;
He wrought by weight and measure,
And I was with him then;
Myself the Father's pleasure,
And mine the sons of men.

3 Thus Wisdom's words discover
Thy glory and thy grace,
Thou everlasting lover
Of our unworthy race!
Thy gracious eye surveyed us,
Ere stars were seen above;
In wisdom thou hast made us,
And died for us in love.

4 And couldst thou be delighted
With creatures such as we!
Who, when we saw thee, slighted,
And nail'd thee to a tree?
Unfathomable wonder,
And mystery divine!
The voice that speaks in thunder,
Says, "Sinner, I am thine!" C.

HYMN LIII.

A Friend that sticketh closer than a Brother. Chap. xviii. 24.

1 One there is, above all others,
Well deserves the name of Friend;
His is love beyond a brother's,
Costly, free, and knows no end:
They who once his kindness prove,
Find it everlasting love.

2 Which of all our friends to save us,
Could or would have shed their blood!
But our Jesus died to have us
Reconcil'd to him in God:
This was boundless love indeed!
Jesus is a friend in need.

3 Men, when rais'd to lofty stations,
Often know their friends no more;
Slight and scorn their poor relations,
Though they valued them before;
But our Saviour always owns
Those whom he redeem'd with groans.

4 When he liv'd on earth abased,
Friend of sinners was his name;
Now above all glory raised,
He rejoices in the same:
Still he calls them brethren, friends,
And to all their wants attends.

5 Could we bear from one another
What he daily bears from us;
Yet this glorious Friend and Brother
Loves us though we treat him thus:
Though for good we render ill,
He accounts us brethren still.

6 O for grace our hearts to soften!
Teach us, Lord, at length to love;
We, alas! forget too often,
What a friend we have above:
But when home our souls are brought,
We will love thee as we ought.

ECCLESIASTES.

HYMN LIV.

*Vanity of Life.** Chap. i. 2.

1 The evils that beset our path,
Who can prevent or cure?
We stand upon the brink of death,
When most we seem secure.

2 If we to-day sweet peace possess,
It soon may be withdrawn;
Some change may plunge us in distress
Before to-morrow's dawn.

3 Disease and pain invade our health,
And find an easy prey;
And oft, when least expected, wealth
Takes wings and flies away.

4 A fever or a blow can shake
Our wisdom's boasted rule,
And of the brightest genius make
A madman or a fool.

5 The gourds from which we look for fruit,
Produce us only pain;
A worm unseen attacks the root,
And all our hopes are vain.

6 I pity those who seek no more
Than such a world can give;
Wretched they are, and blind, and poor,
And dying while they live.

7 Since sin has fill'd the earth with woe,
And creatures fade and die;
Lord, wean our hearts from things below,
And fix our hopes on high.

HYMN LV.

Vanity of the World. Ibid.

1 God gives his mercies to be spent;
Your hoard will do your soul no good;
Gold is a blessing only lent,
Repaid by giving others food.

2 The world's esteem is but a bribe;
To buy their peace you sell your own;
The slave of a vain-glorious tribe,
Who hate you while they make you known.

3 The joy that vain amusements give,
Oh! sad conclusion that it brings!
The honey of a crowded hive,
Defended by a thousand stings.

4 'Tis thus the world rewards the fools
That live upon her treacherous smiles;
She leads them blindfold by her rules,
And ruins all whom she beguiles.

5 God knows the thousands who go down
From pleasure into endless woe;
And with a long despairing groan,
Blaspheme their Maker as they go.

6 O fearful thought! be timely wise;
Delight but in a Saviour's charms;
And God shall take you to the skies,
Embrac'd in everlasting arms. C.

* Book II. Hymn vi.

HYMN LVI.

Vanity of the Creature Sanctified. Ibid.

1 HONEY though the bee prepares,
An envenom'd sting it wears;
Piercing thorns a guard compose
Round the fragrant blooming rose.

2 Where we think to find a sweet,
Oft a painful sting we meet;
When the rose invites our eye,
We forget the thorn is nigh.

3 Why are thus our hopes beguil'd?
Why are all our pleasures spoil'd?
Why do agony and woe
From our choicest comforts grow?

4 Sin has been the cause of all!
'Twas not thus before the fall;
What but pain, and thorn, and sting,
From the root of sin can spring?

5 Now with every good we find
Vanity and grief entwined;
What we feel, or what we fear,
All our joys embitter here.

6 Yet, through the Redeemer's love,
These afflictions blessings prove;
He the wounding stings and thorns
Into healing med'cines turns.

7 From the earth our hearts they wean,
Teach us on his arm to lean,
Urge us to a throne of grace,
Make us seek a resting-place.

8 In the mansions of our King,
Sweets abound without a sting;
Thornless there the roses blow,
And the joys unmingled flow.

SOLOMON'S SONG.

HYMN LVII.

The Name of Jesus. Chap. i. 3.

1 How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ear!
It sooths his sorrows, heels his wounds,
And drives away his fear.

2 It makes the wounded spirit whole,
And calms the troubled breast;
'Tis manna to the hungry soul,
And to the weary rest.

3 Dear name! the rock on which I build,
My shield and hiding-place:
My never-failing treasury, fill'd
With boundless stores of grace.

4 By thee my prayers acceptance gain,
Although with sin defil'd;
Satan accuses me in vain,
And I am own'd a child.

5 Jesus! my Shepherd, Husband, Friend,
My Prophet, Priest, and King!
My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End!
Accept the praise I bring.

6 Weak is the effort of my heart,
And cold my warmest thought;
But when I see thee as thou art,
I'll praise thee as I ought.

7 Till then I would thy love proclaim
With ev'ry fleeting breath;
And may the music of thy name
Refresh my soul in death!

ISAIAH.

HYMN LVIII.

O Lord, I will praise Thee! Chap. xii.

1 I WILL praise thee ev'ry day,
Now thine anger's turn'd away!
Comfortable thoughts arise
From the bleeding sacrifice.

2 Here, in the fair gospel-field,
Wells of free salvation yield
Streams of life a plenteous store,
And my soul shall thirst no more.

3 Jesus is become at length
My salvation and my strength;
And his praises shall prolong,
While I live, my pleasant song.

4 Praise ye, then, his glorious name,
Publish his exalted fame!
Still his worth your praise exceeds,
Excellent are all his deeds.

5 Raise again the joyful sound,
Let the nations roll it round!
Zion shout, for this is he:
God, the Saviour, dwells in thee. C.

HYMN LIX.

The Refuge, River, and Rock of the Church. Chap. xxxii. 2.

1 HE who on earth as man was known,
And bore our sins and pains,
Now seated on the eternal throne,
The God of glory reigns.

2 His hands the wheels of nature guide,
With an unerring skill;
And countless worlds, extended wide,
Obey his sovereign will.

3 While harps unnumber'd sound his praise,
In yonder world above;
His saints on earth admire his ways,
And glory in his love.

4 His righteousness to faith reveal'd,
Wrought out for guilty worms,
Affords a hiding-place and shield
From enemies and storms.

5 This land, through which his pilgrims go,
Is desolate and dry;
But streams of grace from him o'erflow,
Their thirst to satisfy.

6 When troubles, like a burning sun,
Beat heavy on their head,
To this almighty Rock they run,
And find a pleasing shade.

7 How glorious he, how happy they
In such a glorious Friend!
Whose love secures them all the way
And crowns them at the end.

HYMN LX.

*Zion, or the City of God.**
Chap. xxxiii. 20, 21.

1 Glorious things of thee are spoken,†
Zion, city of our God!
He, whose word cannot be broken,
Form'd thee for his own abode:‡
On the Rock of ages founded,§
What can shake thy sure repose?
With salvation's walls surrounded,‖
Thou may'st smile at all thy foes.

2 See! the streams of living waters,
Springing from eternal love,¶
Well supply thy sons and daughters,
And all fear of want remove.
Who can faint when such a river,
Ever flows their thirst to assuage?
Grace, which, like the Lord, the giver,
Never fails from age to age.

3 Round each habitation hov'ring,
See the cloud and fire appear!**
For a glory and a cov'ring,
Showing that the Lord is near;
Thus deriving, from their banner,
Light by night, and shade by day:
Safe they feed upon the manna
Which he gives them when they pray.

4 Bless'd inhabitants of Zion,
Wash'd in the Redeemer's blood!
Jesus, whom their souls rely on,
Makes them kings and priests to God.††
'Tis his love his people raises
Over self to reign as kings,
And as priests, his solemn praises
Each for a thank-off'ring brings.

5 Saviour, if of Zion's city
I through grace a member am,
Let the world deride or pity,
I will glory in thy name:
Fading is the worldling's pleasure,
All his boasted pomp and show:
Solid joys and lasting treasure,
None but Zion's children know.

HYMN LXI.

Look unto me, and be ye saved.
Chap. xlv. 22.

1 As the serpent raised by Moses‡‡
Healed the burning serpent's bite:
Jesus thus himself discloses
To the wounded sinner's sight:
Hear his gracious invitation,
"I have life and peace to give,
I have wrought out full salvation;
Sinner, look to me, and live.

2 "Pore upon your sins no longer,
Well I know their mighty guilt;
But my love than death is stronger
I my blood have freely spilt:
Though your heart has long been harden'd,
Look on me,—it soft shall grow;
Past transgressions shall be pardon'd,
And I 'll wash you white as snow.

3 "I have seen what you were doing,
Though you little thought of me;
You were madly bent on ruin,
But I said,—It shall not be:
You had been for ever wretched,
Had not I espous'd your part;
Now behold my arms outstretched
To receive you to my heart.

4 "Well may shame, and joy, and wonder,
All your inward passions move:
I could crush thee with my thunder
But I speak to thee in love:
See! your sins are all forgiven,
I have paid the countless sum;
Now my death has open'd heaven,
Thither you shall shortly come."

5 Dearest Saviour, we adore thee
For thy precious life and death;
Melt each stubborn heart before thee,
Give us all the eye of faith:
From the law's condemning sentence,
To thy mercy we appeal;
Thou alone canst give repentance,
Thou alone our souls canst heal.

HYMN LXII.

The good Physician.

1 How lost was my condition,
Till Jesus made me whole!
There is but one Physician
Can cure a sin-sick soul.
Next door to death he found me,
And snatch'd me from the grave
To tell to all around me,
His wondrous power to save.

2 The worst of all diseases
Is light compar'd with sin;
On every part it seizes,
But rages most within:
'Tis palsy, plague, and fever,
And madness,—all combin'd;
And none but a believer,
The least relief can find.

3 From men great skill professing
I thought a cure to gain;
But this proved more distressing
And added to my pain.
Some said that nothing ail'd me,
Some gave me up for lost:
Thus every refuge fail'd me,
And all my hopes were cross'd.

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* Book II. Hymn xxiv.
‡ Psal. cxxxii. 14.
‖ Isaiah xxvi. 1.
** Isaiah iv. 5, 6.
‡‡ Numbers xxi. 9.
† Psal. lxxxvii. 3.
§ Matth. xvi. 18.
¶ Psal. xlvi. 4.
†† Rev. i. 6.

4 At length this great Physician,
How matchless is his grace,
Accepted my petition,
And undertook my ease:
First gave me sight to view him,
For sin my eyes had seal'd,
Then bid me look unto him;
I look'd, and I was heal'd.

5 A dying, risen, Jesus,
Seen by the eye of faith,
At once from danger frees us,
And saves the soul from death.
Come, then, to this Physician,
His help he 'll freely give:
He makes no hard condition,
'Tis only—look and live.

HYMN LXIII.

To the Afflicted, tossed with Tempests, and not comforted. Chap. liv. 5—11.

1 PENSIVE, doubting, fearful heart,
Hear what Christ the Saviour says;
Every word should joy impart,
Change thy mourning into praise:
Yes, he speaks, and speaks to thee,
May he help thee to believe!
Then thou presently wilt see
Thou hast little cause to grieve.

2 "Fear thou not, nor be asham'd,
All thy sorrows soon shall end:
I who heaven and earth have fram'd,
Am thy husband and thy friend:
I the High and Holy One,
Israel's God, by all ador'd,
As thy Saviour will be known,
Thy Redeemer and thy Lord.

3 "For a moment I withdrew,
And thy heart was fill'd with pain;
But my mercies I 'll renew,
Thou shalt soon rejoice again:
Though I seem to hide my face,
Very soon my wrath shall cease;
'Tis but for a moment's space,
Ending in eternal peace.

4 "When my peaceful bow appears,*
Painted on the wat'ry cloud,
'Tis to dissipate thy fears,
Lest the earth should be o'erflow'd:
'Tis an emblem too of grace,
Of my cov'nant-love a sign;
Though the mountains leave their place,
Thou shalt be for ever mine.

5 "Though afflicted, tempest-toss'd,
Comfortless a while thou art,
Do not think thou canst be lost,
Thou art graven on my heart:
All thy wastes I will repair,
Thou shalt be rebuilt anew;
And in thee it shall appear
What a God of love can do."

* Gen. ix. 13, 14.

HYMN LXIV.

The contrite Heart. Chap. lvii. 15.

1 THE Lord will happiness divine
On contrite hearts bestow;
Then tell me, gracious God, is mine
A contrite heart or no?

2 I hear, but seem to hear in vain,
Insensible as steel;
If aught is felt, 'tis only pain,
To find I cannot feel.

3 I sometimes think myself inclined
To love thee if I could,
But often feel another mind,
Averse to all that 's good.

4 My best desires are faint and few,
I fain would strive for more;
But when I cry, "My strength renew,"
Seem weaker than before.

5 Thy saints are comforted, I know,
And love thy house of prayer;
I therefore go where others go,
But find no comfort there.

6 O make this heart rejoice or ache!
Decide this doubt for me;
And if it be not broken, break,
And heal it, if it be. C.

HYMN LXV.

The future Peace and Glory of the Church. Chap. lx. 15—20.

1 HEAR what God the Lord hath spoken,
O my people, faint and few,
Comfortless, afflicted, broken,
Fair abodes I build for you;
Themes of heart-felt tribulation
Shall no more perplex your ways;
You shall name your walls Salvation,
And your gates shall all be Praise.

2 There, like streams that feed the garden,
Pleasures without end shall flow;
For the Lord, your faith rewarding,
All his bounty shall bestow:
Still in undisturb'd possession,
Peace and righteousness shall reign;
Never shall you feel oppression,
Hear the voice of war again.

3 Ye no more your suns descending,
Waning moons no more shall see;
But, your griefs for ever ending,
Find eternal noon in me;
God shall rise, and shining o'er you,
Change to day the gloom of night;
He the Lord shall be your glory,
God your everlasting light. C.

JEREMIAH.

HYMN LXVI.

Trust of the Wicked and the Righteous compared. Chap. xvii. 5—8.

1 As parched in the barren sands,
Beneath a burning sky,

The worthless bramble with'ring stands,
And only grows to die:

2 Such is the sinner's awful case,
Who makes the world his trust,
And dares his confidence to place
In vanity and dust.

3 A secret curse destroys his root,
And dries his moisture up;
He lives a while but bears no fruit,
Then dies without a hope.

4 But happy he whose hopes depend
Upon the Lord alone;
The soul that trusts in such a friend
Can ne'er be overthrown.

5 Though gourds should wither, cisterns break,
And creature-comforts die,
No change his solid hope can shake,
Or stop his sure supply.

6 So thrives and blooms the tree whose roots
By constant streams are fed;
Arrayed in green, and rich in fruits,
It rears its branching head.

7 It thrives though rain should be denied,
And drought around prevail;
'Tis planted by a river's side,
Whose waters cannot fail.

HYMN LXVII.

Jehovah-Tsidkenu; or, the Lord our righteousness. Chap. xxiii. 6.

1 My God, how perfect are thy ways!
But mine polluted are;
Sin twines itself about my praise,
And slides into my prayer.

2 When I would speak what thou hast done
To save me from my sin,
I cannot make thy mercies known,
But self-applause creeps in.

3 Divine desire, that holy flame
Thy grace creates in me,
Alas! impatience is its name,
When it returns to thee.

4 This heart a fountain of vile thoughts,
How does it overflow!
While self upon the surface floats,
Still bubbling from below.

5 Let others in the gaudy dress,
Of fancied merit shine,
The Lord shall be my righteousness,
The Lord for ever mine. C.

HYMN LXVIII.

Ephraim repenting. Chap. xxxi. 18—20.

1 My God, till I receiv'd thy stroke,
How like a beast was I!
So unaccustom'd to the yoke,
So backward to comply.

2 With grief my just reproach I bear,
Shame fills me at the thought;
How frequent my rebellions were!
What wickedness I wrought!

3 Thy merciful restraint I scorn'd,
And left the pleasant road;
Yet turn me, and I shall be turn'd,
Thou art the Lord my God.

4 Is Ephraim banish'd from my thoughts
Or vile in my esteem?
No, saith the Lord, with all his faults,
I still remember him.

5 Is he a dear and pleasant child?
Yes, dear and pleasant still;
Though sin his foolish heart beguil'd,
And he withstood my will.

6 My sharp rebuke has laid him low,
He seeks my face again;
My pity kindles at his woe,
He shall not seek in vain. C

LAMENTATIONS.

HYMN LXIX.

The Lord is my Portion. Chap. iii. 24.

1 From pole to pole let others roam,
And search in vain for bliss;
My soul is satisfied at home,
The Lord my portion is.

2 Jesus, who on his glorious throne
Rules heaven, and earth, and sea,
Is pleas'd to claim me for his own,
And give himself to me.

3 His person fixes all my love,
His blood removes my fear;
And while he pleads for me above,
His arm preserves me here.

4 His word of promise is my food,
His Spirit is my guide:
Thus daily is my strength renew'd,
And all my wants supplied.*

5 For him I count as gain each loss,
Disgrace, for him, renown;
Well may I glory in my cross,
While he prepares my crown!

6 Let worldlings then indulge their boast,
How much they gain or spend:
Their joys must soon give up the ghost,
But mine shall know no end.

EZEKIEL.

HYMN LXX.

Humbled and silenced by Mercy. Chap. xvi. 63.

1 Once perishing in blood I lay,
Creatures no help could give;
But Jesus pass'd me in the way,
He saw, and bid me live.

* Book III. Hymn lix.

2 Though Satan still his rule maintain'd,
And all his arts employed;
That mighty word his rage restrain'd,
I could not be destroyed.

3 At length the time of love arriv'd,
When I my Lord should know;
Then Satan, of his power depriv'd,
Was forc'd to let me go.

4 O can I e'er that day forget,
When Jesus kindly spoke!
"Poor soul! my blood has paid thy debt,
And now I break thy yoke.

5 "Henceforth I take thee for my own,
And give myself to thee;
Forsake the idols thou hast known,
And yield thyself to me."

6 Ah, worthless heart! it promis'd fair,
And said it would be thine;
I little thought it e'er would dare
Again with idols join.

7 Lord, dost thou such backslidings heal,
And pardon all that's past?
Sure, if I am not made of steel,
Thou hast prevail'd at last.

8 My tongue which rashly spoke before,
This mercy will restrain;
Surely I now shall boast no more,
Nor censure, nor complain.

HYMN LXXI.

The Covenant. Chap. xxxvi. 25—28.

1 THE Lord proclaims his grace abroad!
Behold I change your hearts of stone;
Each shall renounce his idol-god,
And serve, henceforth, the Lord alone.

2 My grace, a flowing stream, proceeds
To wash your filthiness away;
Ye shall abhor your former deeds,
And learn my statutes to obey.

3 My truth the great design ensures,
I give myself away to you;
You shall be mine, I will be yours,
Your God unalterably true.

4 Yet not unsought, or unimplor'd,
The plenteous grace shall I confer;*
No—your whole heart shall seek the Lord,
I 'll put a praying spirit there.

5 From the first breath of life divine,
Down to the last expiring hour,
The gracious work shall all be mine,
Begun and ended in my power. C.

HYMN LXXII.

Jehovah-Shammah; or, the Lord is there.
Chap. xlviii. 35.

1 "As birds their infant brood protect,†
And spread their wings to shelter them,"
Thus saith the Lord to his elect,
"Thus will I guard Jerusalem."

2 And what then is Jerusalem,
This darling object of his care?
Where is its worth in God's esteem?
Who built it? who inhabits there!

3 Jehovah founded it in blood,
The blood of his incarnate Son;
There dwell the saints, once foes to God,
The sinners whom he calls his own.

4 There, though besieg'd on every side,
Yet much belov'd and guarded well,
From age to age they have defied
The utmost force of earth and hell.

5 Let earth repent, and hell despair,
This city has a sure defence;
Her name is call'd, The Lord is there,
And who has power to drive him thence?
C.

* Ver. 37. † Isaiah xxi. 5.

DANIEL.

HYMN LXXIII.

The Power and Triumph of Faith.
Chap. iii. 6.

1 SUPPORTED by the word,
Though in himself a worm,
The servant of the Lord
Can wondrous acts perform:
Without dismay he boldly treads
Where'er the path of duty leads.

2 The haughty king in vain,
With fury on his brow,
Believers would constrain
To golden gods to bow;
The furnace could not make them fear,
Because they knew the Lord was near.

3 As vain was the decree
Which charg'd them not to pray;
Daniel still bow'd his knee,
And worshipp'd thrice a-day:
Trusting in God, he fear'd not men,
Though threaten'd with the lions' den.

4 Secure they might refuse
Compliance with such laws;
For what had they to lose,
When God espous'd their cause?
He made the hungry lions crouch,
Nor durst the fire his children touch.

5 The Lord is still the same,
A mighty shield and tower,
And they who trust his name
Are guarded by his power;
He can the rage of lions tame,
And bear them harmless through the flame.

6 Yet we too often shrink
When trials are in view;
Expecting we must sink,
And never can get through:
But could we once believe indeed,
From all these fears we should be freed.

HYMN LXXIV.

Belshazzar. Chap. v. 5, 6.

1 Poor sinners! little do they think
With whom they have to do!
But stand securely on the brink
Of everlasting woe.

2 Belshazzar thus, profanely bold,
The Lord of hosts defied;
But vengeance soon his boasts control'd,
And humbled all his pride.

3 He saw a hand upon the wall,
(And trembled on his throne)
Which wrote his sudden dreadful fall
In characters unknown.

4 Why should he tremble at the view
Of what he could not read?
Foreboding conscience quickly knew
His ruin was decreed.

5 See him o'erwhelm'd with deep distress!
His eyes with anguish roll;
His looks and loosen'd joints express
The terrors of his soul.

6 His pomp and music, guests and wine,
No more delight afford;
O sinner! ere this case be thine,
Begin to seek the Lord.

7 The law, like this hand-writing stands,
And speaks the wrath of God;*
But Jesus answers its demands,
And cancels it with blood.

JONAH.

HYMN LXXV.

The Gourd. Chap. iv. 7.

1 As once for Jonah, so the Lord,
To soothe and cheer my mournful hours,
Prepar'd for me a pleasing gourd:
Cool was its shade, and sweet its flowers.

2 To prize his gift was surely right;
But through the folly of my heart,
It hid the giver from my sight,
And soon my joy was turn'd to smart.

3 While I admir'd its beauteous form,
Its pleasant shade and grateful fruit,
The Lord displeas'd sent forth a worm
Unseen to prey upon the root.

4 I trembled when I saw it fade,
But guilt restrain'd the murm'ring word;
My folly I confess'd and pray'd,
Forgive my sin, and spare my gourd.

5 His wondrous love can ne'er be told:
He heard me, and reliev'd my pain;
His word the threatening worm control'd,
And bid my gourd revive again.

6 Now, Lord, my gourd is mine no more,
'Tis thine, who only could'st it raise;
The idol of my heart before,
Henceforth shall flourish to thy praise.

* Co. ii. 14.

ZECHARIAH.

HYMN LXXVI.

Prayer for the Lord's promised Presence. Chap. ii. 10.

1 Son of God, thy people shield!
Must we still thine absence mourn?
Let thy promise be fulfill'd,
Thou hast said, "I will return."

2 Gracious Leader, now appear!
Shine upon us with thy light!
Like the spring, when thou art near,
Days and suns are doubly bright.

3 As a mother counts the days
Till her absent son she see,
Longs and watches, weeps and prays,
So our spirits long for thee.

4 Come, and let us feel thee nigh,
Then thy sheep shall feed in peace,
Plenty bless us from on high,
Evil from amongst us cease.

5 With thy love, and voice, and aid,
Thou canst every care assuage;
Then we shall not be afraid
Though the world and Satan rage.

6 Thus each day for thee we 'll spend,
While our callings we pursue,
And the thoughts of such a friend,
Shall each night our joy renew.

7 Let thy light be ne'er withdrawn;
Golden days afford us long;
Thus we pray at early dawn,
This shall be our evening song.

HYMN LXXVII.

A Brand plucked out of the Fire. Chap. iii. 1—5.

1 With Satan, my accuser, near,
My spirit trembled when I saw
The Lord in majesty appear,
And heard the language of his law.

2 In vain I wish'd and strove to hide
The tatter'd filthy rags I wore,
While my fierce foe insulting cried,
"See what you trusted in before!"

3 Struck dumb, and left without a plea,
I heard my gracious Saviour say,
"Know, Satan, I this sinner free,
I died to take his sins away.

4 "This is a band which I, in love,
To save from wrath and sin design:
In vain thy accusations prove,
I answer all, and claim him mine."

5 At his rebuke the tempter fled;
Then he removed my filthy dress;
"Poor sinner, take this robe," he said,
"It is thy Saviour's righteousness.

6 "And see a crown of life prepared:
That I might thus thy head adorn,
I thought no shame or suff'ring hard,
But wore for thee a crown of thorn."

7 O how I heard these gracious words!
They broke and heal'd my heart at once,
Constrain'd me to become the Lord's,
And all my idol-gods renounce.

8 Now, Satan, thou hast lost thy aim,
Against this brand thy threats are vain;
Jesus has pluck'd it from the flame,
And who shall put it in again?

HYMN LXXVIII.

On one Stone shall be seven Eyes.
Chap. iii. 9.

1 JESUS Christ, the Lord's anointed,
Who his blood for sinners spilt,
Is the stone by God appointed,
And the church is on him built: [guilt.
He delivers all who trust in him from their

2 Many eyes at once are fixed
On a person so divine:
Love, with awful justice mixed,
In his great redemption shine: [mine!
Mighty Jesus, give me leave to call thee

3 By the Father's eye approved,
Lo, a voice is heard from heaven,*
"Sinners, this is my beloved,
For your ransom freely given,
All offences for his sake shall be forgiven."

4 Angels with their eyes pursued him,†
When he left his glorious throne;
With astonishment they viewed him
Put the form of servant on: [known.
Angels worshipp'd him who was on earth un-

5 Satan and his host amazed,
Saw this stone in Zion laid;
Jesus, though to death abased,
Bruis'd the subtle serpent's head,‡ [shed.
When, to save us, on the cross his blood he

6 When a guilty sinner sees him,
While he looks his soul is heal'd:
Soon this sight from anguish frees him,
And imparts a pardon seal'd:§ [veal'd.
May this Saviour be to all our hearts re-

7 With desire and admiration,
All his blood-bought flock behold:
Him who wrought out their salvation,
And enclos'd them in his fold;‖ [cold.
Yet their warmest love and praises are too

8 By the eye of carnal reason,
Many view him with disdain;¶
How will they abide the season,
When he 'll come with all his train? [vain.
To escape him then they 'll wish, but wish in

9 How their hearts will melt and tremble
When they hear his awful voice;**
But his saints he 'll then assemble,
As his portion and his choice,
And receive them to his everlasting joys.

* Matth. iii. 17
† 1 Tim iii. 16.
‡ John xii. 31.
§ John iii. 15.
‖ 1 Pet. ii. 7.
¶ Psal. cxviii. 22.
** Rev. i. 7.

HYMN LXXIX.

Praise for the Fountain opened.

1 THERE is a fountain fill'd with blood
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins;
And sinners plung'd beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

2 The dying thief rejoic'd to see
That fountain in his day;
And there have I, as vile as he,
Wash'd all my sins away.

3 Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransom'd church of God
Be sav'd to sin no more.

4 E'er since, by faith, I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.

5 Then in a nobler, sweeter song,
I 'll sing thy power to save;
When this poor lisping stamm'ring tongue
Lies silent in the grave.

6 Lord, I believe thou hast prepar'd
(Unworthy though I be)
For me a blood-bought free reward,
A golden harp for me!

7 'Tis strung, and tuned, for endless years,
And form'd by power divine;
To sound in God the Father's ears
No other name but thine. C.

MALACHI.

HYMN LXXX.

They shall be mine, saith the Lord.
Chap. iii. 16—18.

1 WHEN sinners utter boasting words,
And glory in their shame;
The Lord, well pleas'd, an ear affords
To those who fear his name.

2 They often meet to seek his face,
And what they do, or say,
Is noted in his book of grace
Against another day,

3 For they by faith a day descry,
And joyfully expect,
When he, descending from the sky,
His jewels will collect:

4 Unnotic'd now, because unknown,
A poor and suffering few;
He comes to claim them for his own,
And bring them forth to view.

5 With transport then their Saviour's care
And favour they shall prove;
As tender parents guard and spare
The children of their love.

6 Assembled worlds will then discern
The saints alone are blest;
When wrath shall like an oven burn,
And vengeance strike the rest.

MATTHEW.

HYMN LXXXI.

The Beggar. Chap. vii. 7, 8.

1 Encourag'd by thy word
Of promise to the poor,
Behold, a beggar, Lord,
Waits at thy mercy's door!
No hand, no heart, O Lord, but thine,
Can help or pity wants like mine.

2 The beggar's usual plea,
Relief from men to gain,
If offer'd unto thee,
I know thou would'st disdain;
And pleas which move thy gracious ear,
Are such as men would scorn to hear.

3 I have no right to say,
That though I now am poor,
Yet once there was a day
When I possessed more;
Thou know'st that, from my very birth,
I 've been the poorest wretch on earth.

4 Nor can I dare profess,
As beggars often do,
Though great is my distress,
My wants have been but few;
If thou should'st leave my soul to starve,
It would be what I well deserve.

5 'Twere folly to pretend
I never begg'd before;
Or if thou now befriend,
I 'll trouble thee no more:
Thou often hast reliev'd my pain,
And often I must come again.

6 Though crumbs are much too good
For such a dog as I,
No less than children's food
My soul can satisfy:
O do not frown and bid me go,
I must have all thou canst bestow.

7 Nor can I willing be
Thy bounty to conceal
From others who, like me,
Their wants and hunger feel:
I 'll tell them of thy mercy's store,
And try to send a thousand more.

8 Thy thoughts, thou only wise!
Our thoughts and ways transcend,
Far as the arched skies
Above the earth extend:*
Such pleas as mine men would not hear,
But God receives a beggar's prayer.

HYMN LXXXII.

The Leper. Chap. viii. 2, 3.

1 Oft as the leper's case I read,
My own describ'd I feel;
Sin is a leprosy indeed,
Which none but Christ can heal.

2 A while I would have pass'd for well,
And strove my spots to hide:
Till it broke out incurable,
Too plain to be denied.

3 Then from the saints I thought to flee,
And dreaded to be seen:
I thought they all would point at me,
And cry, "Unclean, unclean!"

4 What anguish did my soul endure
Till hope and patience ceas'd!
The more I strove myself to cure,
The more the plague increas'd.

5 While thus I lay distress'd, I saw
The Saviour passing by;
To him, though fill'd with shame and awe,
I rais'd my mournful cry.

6 Lord, thou canst heal me if thou wilt,
For thou canst all things do;
O cleanse my leprous soul from guilt,
My filthy heart renew!

7 He heard, and, with a gracious look,
Pronounc'd the healing word;
"I will,—be clean:" and while he spoke,
I felt my health restor'd.

8 Come, lepers, seize the present hour,
The Saviour's grace to prove;
He can relieve, for he is power;
He will, for he is love.

HYMN LXXXIII.

A sick Soul. Chap. ix. 12.

1 Physician of my sin-sick soul,
To thee I bring my case;
My raging malady control,
And heal me by thy grace.

2 Pity the anguish I endure,
See how I mourn and pine;
For never can I hope a cure
From any hand but thine.

3 I would disclose my whole complaint,
But where shall I begin?
No words of mine can fully paint
That worst distemper, sin.

4 It lies not in a single part,
But through my frame is spread,
A burning fever in my heart,
A palsy in my head.

5 It makes me deaf, and dumb, and blind,
And impotent and lame;
And overclouds, and fills my mind
With folly, fear, and shame.

6 A thousand evil thoughts intrude,
Tumultuous, in my breast;
Which indispose me for my food,
And rob me of my rest.

7 Lord, I am sick, regard my cry,
And set my spirit free;
Say, canst thou let a sinner die,
Who longs to live to thee?

* Isaiah lv. 8, 9.

HYMN LXXXIV.

Satan returning. Chap. xii. 43—45.

1 When Jesus claims the sinner's heart,
Where Satan ruled before;
The evil spirit must depart,
And dares return no more.

2 But when he goes without constraint,
And wanders from his home,
Although withdrawn, 'tis but a feint,
He means again to come.

3 Some outward change perhaps is seen,
If Satan quit the place;
But though the house seem swept and clean,
'Tis destitute of grace.

4 Except the Saviour dwell and reign
Within the sinner's mind,
Satan, when he returns again,
Will easy entrance find.

5 With rage, and malice seven-fold,
He then resumes his sway,
No more by checks to be control'd,
No more to go away.

6 The sinner's former state was bad,
But worse the latter far:
He lives possessed, blind, and mad,
And dies in dark despair.

7 Lord save me from this dreadful end,
And from this heart of mine!
O drive and keep away the fiend,
Who fears no voice but thine!

HYMN LXXXV.

The Sower. Chap. xiii. 3.

1 Ye sons of earth, prepare the plough,
Break up your fallow-ground:
The sower is gone forth to sow,
And scatter blessings round.

2 The seed that finds a stony soil
Shoots forth a hasty blade,
But ill repays the sower's toil,
Soon wither'd, scorch'd, and dead.

3 The thorny ground is sure to baulk
All hopes of harvest there:
We find a tall and sickly stalk,
But not the fruitful ear.

4 The beaten path and high-way side
Receive the trust in vain;
The watchful birds the spoil divide,
And pick up all the grain.

5 But where the Lord of grace and power
Has bless'd the happy field,
How plenteous is the golden store
The deep-wrought furrows yield.

6 Father of mercies, we have need
Of thy preparing grace:
Let the same hand that gives the seed
Provide a fruitful place. C.

HYMN LXXXVI.

The Wheat and Tares. Chap. xiii. 37—42.

1 Though in the outward church below
The wheat and tares together grow,
Jesus ere long will weed the crop,
And pluck the tares in anger up.

2 Will it relieve their horrors there,
To recollect their stations here?
How much they heard, how much they knew,
How long amongst the wheat they grew?

3 O this will aggravate their case,
They perish'd under means of grace:
To them the word of life and faith
Became an instrument of death.

4 We seem alike when thus we meet,
Strangers might think we all are wheat;
But to the Lord's all-searching eyes,
Each heart appears without disguise.

5 The tares are spar'd for various ends,
Some for the sake of praying friends;
Others the Lord, against their will,
Employs his counsels to fulfil.

6 But though they grow so tall and strong,
His plan will not require them long:
In harvest, when he saves his own,
The tares shall into hell be thrown.

HYMN LXXXVII.

Peter walking upon the Water. Chap. xiv. 28—31.

1 A word from Jesus calms the sea,
The stormy wind controls,
And gives repose and liberty
To tempest-tossed souls.

2 To Peter on the waves he came,
And gave him instant peace:
Thus he to me reveal'd his name,
And bid my sorrows cease.

3 Then, fill'd with wonder, joy, and love,
Peter's request was mine:
Lord, call me down, I long to prove
That I am wholly thine.

4 Unmov'd at all I have to meet
On life's tempestuous sea,
Hard shall be easy, bitter sweet,
So I may follow thee.

5 He heard and smil'd, and bid me try:
I eagerly obeyed;
But when from him I turn'd my eye,
How was my soul dismayed.

6 The storm increas'd on ev'ry side,
I felt my spirit shrink,
And soon, with Peter, loud I cried,
"Lord, save me or I sink!"

7 Kindly he caught me by the hand,
And said, "Why dost thou fear?
Since thou art come to my command,
And I am always near.

8 "Upon my promise rest thy hope,
And keep my love in view:
I stand engag'd to hold thee up,
And guide thee safely through."

HYMN LXXXVIII.

Woman of Canaan. Chap. xv. 22—28.

1 Prayer an answer will obtain,
Though the Lord a while delay:
None shall seek his face in vain,
None be empty sent away.

2 When the woman came from Tyre,
And for help to Jesus sought,
Though he granted her desire,
Yet at first he answer'd not.

3 Could she guess at his intent,
When he to his followers said,
"I to Israel's sheep am sent,
Dogs must not have children's bread."

4 She was not of Israel's seed,
But of Canaan's wretched race,
Thought herself a dog indeed:
Was not this a hopeless case?

5 Yet although from Canaan sprung,
Though a dog herself she styl'd,
She had Israel's faith and tongue,
And was own'd for Abrah'm's child.

6 From his words she draws a plea:
"Though unworthy children's bread,
'Tis enough for one like me
If with crumbs I may be fed."

7 Jesus then his heart reveal'd:
"Woman, canst thou thus believe?
I to thy petition yield;
All that thou canst wish, receive."

8 'Tis a pattern set for us,
How we ought to wait and pray:
None who plead and wrestle thus,
Shall be empty sent away.

HYMN LXXXIX.

What think ye of Christ? Chap. xxii. 42.

1 What think ye of Christ? is the test
To try both your state and your scheme,
You cannot be right in the rest,
Unless you think rightly of him.
As Jesus appears in your view,
As he is beloved or not;
So God is disposed to you,
And mercy or wrath is your lot.

2 Some take him a creature to be,
A man, or an angel at most;
Sure these have not feelings like me,
Nor know themselves wretched and lost:
So guilty, so helpless am I,
I durst not confide in his blood,
Nor on his protection rely,
Unless I were sure he is God.

3 Some call him a Saviour, in word,
But mix their own works with his plan,
And hope he his help will afford,
When they have done all that they can.
If doings prove rather too light
(A little, they own, they may fail,)
They purpose to make up full weight,
By casting his name in the scale.

4 Some style him the Pearl of great price,
And say he 's the fountain of joys;
Yet feed upon folly and vice,
And cleave to the world and its toys:
Like Judas, the Saviour they kiss,
And, while they salute him, betray;
Ah! what will profession like this
Avail in the terrible day?

5 If ask'd, what of Jesus I think?
Though still my best thoughts are but poor,
I say, He's my meat and my drink,
My life, and my strength, and my store;
My shepherd, my husband, my friend,
My Saviour from sin and from thrall;
My hope from beginning to end,
My portion, my Lord, and my all.

HYMN XC.

*The foolish Virgins.** Chap. xxv. 1.

1 When, descending from the sky,
The Bridegroom shall appear,
And the solemn midnight cry
Shall call professors near,
How the sound our hearts will damp!
How will shame o'erspread each fac'!
If we only have a lamp,
Without the oil of grace.

2 Foolish virgins then will wake,
And seek for a supply;
But in vain the pains they take,
To borrow or to buy.
Then with those they now despise,
Earnestly they wish to share;
But the best among the wise
Will have no oil to spare.

3 Wise they are, and truly blest,
Who then shall ready be!
But despair will seize the rest,
And dreadful misery;
Once they 'll cry, we scorn to doubt,
Though in lies our trust we put;
Now our lamp of hope is out,
The door of mercy shut.

4 If they then presume to plead,
"Lord, open to us now;
We on earth have heard and prayed,
And with thy saints did bow:"
He will answer from his throne,
"Though you with my people mix'd,
Yet to me ye ne'er were known;
Depart, your doom is fix'd."

5 O that none who worship here
May hear that word, "Depart,"
Lord, impress a godly fear
On each professor's heart:
Help us, Lord, to search the camp,
Let us not ourselves beguile;
Trusting to a dying lamp,
Without a stock of oil.

* Book III. Hymn lxxii.

HYMN XCI.

Peter sinning and repenting.
Chap. xxvi. 73.

1 WHEN Peter boasted, soon he fell,
Yet was by grace restor'd;
His case should be regarded well
By all who fear the Lord.

2 A voice it has, and helping hand,
Backsliders to recall;
And cautions those who think they stand,
Lest suddenly they fall.

3 He said, "Whatever others do,
With Jesus I'll abide;"
Yet soon, amidst a murd'rous crew,
His suffering Lord denied.

4 He who had been so bold before,
Now trembled like a leaf;
Not only lied, but curs'd and swore,
To gain the more belief.

5 When he blasphem'd, he heard the cock,
And Jesus look'd in love;
At once, as if by lightning struck,
His tongue forebore to move.

6 Deliver'd thus from Satan's snare,
He starts as from a sleep;
His Saviour's look he could not bear,
But hasted forth to weep.

7 But sure the faithful cock had crow'd
A hundred times in vain,
Had not the Lord that look bestow'd,
The meaning to explain.

8 As I, like Peter, vows have made,
Yet acted Peter's part;
So conscience, like the cock, upbraids
My base, ungrateful heart.

9 Lord Jesus, hear a sinner's cry,
My broken peace renew;
And grant one pitying look, that I
May weep with Peter too.

MARK.

HYMN XCII.

The Legion dispossessed. Chap. v. 18, 19.

1 LEGION was my name by nature,
Satan rag'd within my breast;
Never misery was greater,
Never sinner more possess'd:
Mischievous to all around me,
To myself the greatest foe;
Thus I was when Jesus found me,
Fill'd with madness, sin, and woe.

2 Yet in this forlorn condition,
When he came to set me free,
I replied to my Physician,
"What have I to do with thee?"
But he would not be prevented,
Rescu'd me against my will;
Had he staid till I consented,
I had been a captive still.

3 "Satan, though thou fain wouldst have it.
Know this soul is none of thine;
I have shed my blood to save it,
Now I challenge it for mine:*
Though it long has thee resembled,
Henceforth it shall me obey."
Thus he spoke, while Satan trembled,
Gnash'd his teeth, and fled away.

4 Thus my frantic soul he healed,
Bid my sins and sorrow cease;
"Take," said he, my pardon sealed,
I have sav'd thee, go in peace:"
Rather take me, Lord, to heaven,
Now thy love and grace I know;
Since thou hast my sins forgiven,
Why should I remain below!

5 "Love," he said, "will sweeten labours,
Thou hast something yet to do;
Go and tell your friends and neighbours
What my love has done for you:
Live to manifest my glory,
Wait for heaven a little space;
Sinners, when they hear thy story,
Will repent, and seek my face."

HYMN XCIII.

The Ruler's Daughter raised.
Chap. v. 39—42.

1 COULD the creatures help or ease us,
Seldom should we think of prayer;
Few, if any, come to Jesus,
Till reduc'd to self-despair;
Long we either slight or doubt him;
But when all the means we try
Prove we cannot do without him,
Then at last to him we cry.

2 Thus the ruler, when his daughter
Suffer'd much, though Christ was nigh,
Still deferr'd it till he thought her
At the very point to die:
Though he mourn'd for her condition,
He did not entreat the Lord,
Till he found that no physician
But himself could help afford.

3 Jesus did not once upbraid him,
That he had no sooner come;
But a gracious answer made him,
And went straightway with him home:
Yet his faith was put to trial,
When his servants came, and said,
"Though he gave thee no denial.
'Tis too late, the child is dead."

4 Jesus, to prevent his grieving,
Kindly spoke, and eas'd his pain;
"Be not fearful, but believing,
Thou shalt see her live again."
When he found the people weeping,
"Cease," he said; "no longer mourn;
For she is not dead, but sleeping:"
Then they laughed him to scorn.

* Book III. Hymn liv.

5 O thou meek and lowly Saviour,
How determin'd is thy love!
Not this rude unkind behaviour
Could thy gracious purpose move;
Soon as he the room had enter'd,
Spoke, and took her by the hand;
Death at once his prey surrender'd,
And she liv'd at his command.

6 Fear not, then, distress'd believer,
Venture on his mighty name;
He is able to deliver,
And his love is still the same:
Can his pity or his power
Suffer thee to pray in vain?
Wait but his appointed hour,
And thy suit thou shalt obtain.

HYMN XCIV.

*But one Loaf.** Chap. viii. 14.

1 When the disciples crossed the lake
With but one loaf on board,
How strangely did their hearts mistake
The caution of their Lord!

2 "The leaven of the Pharisees
Beware," the Saviour said:
They thought, it is because he sees
We have forgotten bread.

3 It seems they had forgotten too,
What their own eyes had view'd;
How with what scarce suffic'd for few,
He fed a multitude.

4 If five small loaves, by his command,
Could many thousands serve;
Might they not trust his gracious hand,
That they should never starve?

5 They oft his power and love had known,
And doubtless were to blame;
But we have reason good to own,
That we are just the same.

6 How often has he brought relief,
And every want supplied!
Yet soon, again, our unbelief
Says, "Can the Lord provide?"

7 Be thankful for one loaf to-day,
Though that be all your store;
To-morrow, if you trust and pray,
Shall timely bring you more.

HYMN XCV.

Bartimeus. Chap. x. 47, 48.

1 "Mercy, O thou Son of David!"
Thus blind Bartimeus prayed;
"Others by this word are saved,
Now to me afford thine aid."
Many for his crying chid him,
But he called the louder still;
Till the gracious Saviour bid him,
"Come, and ask me what you will."

2 Money was not what he wanted,
Though by begging us'd to live;
But he ask'd, and Jesus granted,
Alms which none but he could give:
"Lord remove this grievous blindness
Let my eyes behold the day;"
Strait he saw, and, won by kindness,
Follow'd Jesus in the way.

3 Oh! methinks I hear him praising,
Publishing to all around,
"Friends, is not my case amazing?
What a Saviour I have found:
O that all the blind but knew him,
And would be advis'd by me!
Surely would they hasten to him,
He would cause them all to see."

HYMN XCVI.

The House of Prayer. Chap. xi. 17.

1 Thy mansion is the christian's heart,
O Lord, thy dwelling-place secure!
Bid the unruly throng depart,
And leave the consecrated door.

2 Devoted as it is to thee,
A thievish swarm frequents this place;
They steal away my joys from me,
And rob my Saviour of his praise.

3 There, too, a sharp designing trade,
Sin, Satan, and the world maintain;
Nor cease to press me, and persuade
To part with ease, and purchase pain.

4 I know them, and I hate their din,
Am weary of the bustling crowd;
But while their voice is heard within,
I cannot serve thee as I would.

5 Oh! for the joy thy presence gives,
What peace shall reign when thou art here;
Thy presence makes this den of thieves
A calm delightful house of prayer.

6 And if thou make thy temple shine,
Yet, self-abas'd, will I adore;
The gold and silver are not mine,
I give thee what was thine before. C.

HYMN XCVII.

The blasted Fig-Tree. Chap. xi. 20.

1 One awful word which Jesus spoke
Against the tree which bore no fruit,
More piercing than the lightning's stroke,
Blasted and dried it to the root.

2 But could a tree the Lord offend
To make him show his anger thus?
He surely had a farther end,
To be a warning word to us.

3 The fig-tree by its leaves was known;
But having not a fig to show,
It brought a heavy sentence down,
"Let none hereafter on thee grow."

4 Too many, who the gospel hear,
Whom Satan blinds, and sin deceives,
We to this fig-tree may compare,
They yield no fruit, but only leaves.

* Book III. Hymn lvii.

5 Knowledge, and zeal, and gifts, and talk,
Unless combin'd with faith and love,
And witness'd by a gospel-walk,
Will not a true profession prove.

6 Without the fruit the Lord expects,
Knowledge will make our state the worse;
The barren trees he still rejects,
And soon will blast them with his curse.

7 O Lord, unite our hearts in prayer!
On each of us thy Spirit send,
That we the fruits of grace may bear,
And find acceptance in the end.

LUKE.

HYMN XCVIII.

The two Debtors. Chap. viii. 47.

1 ONCE a woman silent stood,
While Jesus sat at meat;
From her eyes she pour'd a flood,
To wash his sacred feet;
Shame and wonder, joy and love,
All at once possess'd her mind,
That she e'er so vile could prove,
Yet now forgiveness find.

2 "How came this vile woman here?
Will Jesus notice such?
Sure, if he a prophet were,
He would disdain her touch!"
Simon thus, with scornful heart,
Slighted one whom Jesus lov'd;
But her Saviour took her part,
And thus his pride reprov'd:

3 "If two men in debt were bound,
One less, the other more,
Fifty, or five hundred pound,
And both alike were poor:
Should the lender both forgive,
When he saw them both distress'd,
Which of them would you believe
Engag'd to love him best?"

4 "Surely he who most did owe,"
The Pharisee replied:
Then our Lord, "By judging so,
Thou dost for her decide;
Simon, if, like her, you knew
How much you forgiveness need;
You like her had acted too,
And welcom'd me indeed.

5 "When the load of sin is felt,
And much forgiveness known,
Then the heart of course will melt,
Though hard before as stone:
Blame not then her love and tears,
Greatly she in debt has been;
But I have remov'd her fears,
And pardon'd all her sin."

6 When I read this woman's case,
Her love and humble zeal,
I confess, with shame of face,
My heart is made of steel.
Much has been forgiven to me,
Jesus paid my heavy score;
What a creature must I be,
That I can love no more!

HYMN XCIX.

The good Samaritan. Chap. x. 33—35.

1 How kind the good Samaritan
To him who fell among the thieves!
Thus Jesus pities fallen man,
And heels the wounds the soul receives.

2 Oh! I remember well the day,
When sorely wounded, nearly slain,
Like that poor man I bleeding lay,
And groan'd for help, but groan'd in vain.

3 Men saw me in this helpless case,
And pass'd without compassion by;
Each neighbour turn'd away his face,
Unmoved by my mournful cry.

4 But he whose name had been my scorn,
(As Jews Samaritans despise)
Came, when he saw me thus forlorn,
With love and pity in his eyes.

5 Gently he rais'd me from the ground,
Press'd me to lean upon his arm,
And into every gaping wound,
He pour'd his own all-healing balm.

6 Into his church my steps he led,
The house prepar'd for sinners lost,
Gave charge I should be cloth'd and fed,
And took upon him all the cost.

7 Thus sav'd from death, from want secur'd,
I wait till he again shall come,
(When I shall be completely cur'd)
And take me to his heavenly home.

8 There, through eternal boundless days,
When nature's wheel no longer rolls,
How shall I love, adore, and praise,
This good Samaritan to souls!

HYMN C.

Martha and Mary. Chap. x. 38—42.

1 MARTHA her love and joy express'd,
By care to entertain her guest;
While Mary sat to hear her Lord,
And could not bear to lose a word.

2 The principle, in both the same,
Produc'd in each a different aim;
The one to feast the Lord was led,
The other waited to be fed.

3 But Mary chose the better part,
The Saviour's words refresh'd her heart;
While busy Martha angry grew,
And lost her time and temper too.

4 With warmth she to her sister spoke,
But brought upon herself rebuke:
"One thing is needful, and but one,
Why do thy thoughts on many run?"

5 How oft are we, like Martha, vex'd,
Encumber'd, hurried, and perplex'd?
While trifles so engross our thought
The one thing needful is forgot.

6 Lord, teach us this one thing to choose,
Which they who gain can never lose;
Sufficient in itself alone,
And needful, were the world our own.

7 Let grov'lling hearts the world admire,
Thy love is all that I require:
Gladly I may the rest resign,
If the one needful thing be mine!

HYMN CI.

The Heart taken. Chap. xi. 21, 22.

1 The castle of the human heart,
Strong in its native sin,
Is guarded well in every part,
By him who dwells within.

2 For Satan there in arms resides,
And calls the place his own:
With care against assaults provides,
And rules as on a throne.

3 Each traitor thought, on him as chief,
In blind obedience waits;
And pride, self-will, and unbelief,
Are posted at the gates.

4 Thus Satan for a season reigns,
And keeps his goods in peace;
The soul is pleas'd to wear his chains,
Nor wishes a release.

5 But Jesus, stronger far than he,
In his appointed hour,
Appears to set his people free
From the usurper's power.

6 "This heart I bought with blood," he says,
"And now it shall be mine:"
His voice the strong one arm'd dismays,
He knows he must resign.

7 In spite of unbelief and pride,
And self and Satan's art,
The gates of brass fly open wide,
And Jesus wins the heart.

8 The rebel soul that once withstood
The Saviour's kindest call,
Rejoices now, by grace subdued,
To serve him with her all.

HYMN CII.

The Worldling. Chap. xii. 16—21.

1 "My barns are full, my stores increase,
And now, for many years,
Soul, eat and drink, and take thine ease,
Secure from wants and fears."

2 Thus while a worldling boasted once,
As many now presume,
He heard the Lord himself pronounce
His sudden, awful doom.

3 "This night, vain fool, thy soul must pass
Into a world unknown;
And who shall then the stores possess,
Which thou hast call'd thine own?"

4 Thus blinded mortals fondly scheme
For happiness below;
Till death disturbs the pleasing dream,
And they awake to woe.

5 Ah! who can speak the vast dismay
That fills the sinner's mind,
When, torn by death's strong hand away
He leaves his all behind!

6 Wretches, who cleave to earthly things,
But are not rich to God,
Their dying hour is full of stings,
And hell their dark abode.

7 Dear Saviour, make us timely wise,
Thy gospel to attend,
That we may live above the skies,
When this poor life shall end.

HYMN CIII.

The barren Fig-Tree. Chap. xiii. 6—9.

1 The church a garden is,
In which believers stand,
Like ornamental trees
Planted by God's own hand;
His Spirit waters all their roots,
And ev'ry branch abounds with fruits.

2 But other trees there are,
In this inclosure grow,
Which, though they promise fair,
Have only leaves to show;
No fruits of grace are on them found,
They stand but cumb'rers of the ground.

3 The under gard'ner grieves,
In vain his strength he spends,
For heaps of useless leaves
Afford him small amends:
He hears the Lord his will make known,
To cut the barren fig-trees down.

4 How difficult his post,
What pangs his bowels move,
To find his wishes cross'd,
His labours useless prove!
His last relief, his earnest prayer,
"Lord, spare them yet another year:

5 Spare them, and let me try,
What farther means may do;
I 'll fresh manure apply,
My digging I 'll renew;
Who knows but yet they fruit may yield!
If not—'tis just they must be fell'd."

6 If under means of grace
No gracious fruits appear,
It is a dreadful case;
Though God may long forbear,
At length he 'll strike the threaten'd blow,*
And lay the barren fig-tree low.

* Book II. Hymn xxvi.

HYMN CIV.

The Prodigal Son. Chap. xv. 11—24.

1 AFFLICTIONS, though they seem severe,
In mercy oft are sent;
They stopp'd the prodigal's career,
And forc'd him to repent.

2 Although he no relentings felt,
Till he had spent his store;
His stubborn heart began to melt
When famine pinch'd him sore.

3 "What have I gain'd by sin (he said,)
But hunger, shame, and fear?
My father's house abounds with bread,
While I am starving here.

4 "I 'll go and tell him all I 've done,
And fall before his face;
Unworthy to be call'd his son,
I 'll seek a servant's place."

5 His father saw him coming back,
He saw, and ran, and smiled;
And threw his arms around the neck
Of his rebellious child.

6 "Father, I 've sinn'd—but, O forgive!"
"I 've heard enough," he said;
"Rejoice, my house, my son's alive,
For whom I mourn'd as dead:

7 Now let the fatted calf be slain,
And spread the news around;
My son was dead, but lives again,
Was lost, but now is found."

8 'Tis thus the Lord his love reveals,
To call poor sinners home;
More than a father's love he feels,
And welcomes all that come.

HYMN CV.

The Rich Man and Lazarus.
Chap. xvi. 19—25.

1 A WORLDLING spent each day
In luxury and state,
While a believer lay
A beggar at his gate:
Think not the Lord's appointment strange,
Death made a great and lasting change.

2 Death brought the saint release
From want, disease, and scorn;
And to the land of peace,
His soul, by angels borne,
In Abrah'm's bosom safely placed,
Enjoys an everlasting feast.

3 The rich man also died,
And in a moment fell
From all his pomp and pride
Into the flames of hell;
The beggar's bliss from far beheld,
His soul with double anguish fill'd.

4 "O Abrah'm, send," he cries,
(But his request was vain)
"The beggar from the skies,
To mitigate my pain!
One drop of water I entreat,
To soothe my tongue's tormenting heat."

5 Let all who worldly pelf
And worldly spirits have,
Observe, each for himself,
The answer Abrah'm gave:
"Remember thou wast fill'd with good,
While the poor beggar pin'd for food.

6 "Neglected at thy door,
With tears he begg'd his bread:
But now he weeps no more,
His griefs and pains are fled;
His joys eternally will flow,
While thine expire in endless woe."

7 Lord, make us truly wise,
To choose thy people's lot,
And earthly joys despise,
Which soon will be forgot:
The greatest evil we can fear,
Is to possess our portion here!

HYMN CVI.

*The importunate Widow.** Chap. xviii. 1—7.

1 OUR Lord, who knows full well
The heart of every saint,
Invites us by a parable,
To pray and never faint.

2 He bows his gracious ear,
We never plead in vain;
Yet we must wait till he appear,
And pray, and pray again.

3 Though unbelief suggest,
Why should we longer wait?
He bids us never give him rest,
But be importunate.

4 'Twas thus a widow poor,
Without support or friend,
Beset the unjust judge's door,
And gain'd at last her end.

5 For her he little car'd,
As little for the laws;
Nor God nor man did he regard,
Yet he espous'd her cause.

6 She urg'd him day and night,
Would no denial take;
At length he said, "I 'll do her right,
For my own quiet's sake."

7 And shall not Jesus hear
His chosen when they cry?
Yes, though he may a while forbear,
He 'll help them from on high.

8 'Tis nature, truth, and love,
Engage him on their side;
When they are griev'd, his bowels move,
And can they be denied?

9 Then let us earnest be,
And never faint in prayer;
He loves our importunity,
And makes our cause his care.

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* Book II. Hymn lx.

HYMN CVII.

Zaccheus. Chap. xix. 1—6.

1 Zaccheus climb'd the tree,
And thought himself unknown;
But how surpris'd was he,
When Jesus eall'd him down!
The Lord beheld him, though conceal'd,
And by a word his power reveal'd.

2 Wonder and joy at onee
Were painted in his face:
"Does he my name pronounce,
And does he know my ease?
Will Jesus deign with me to dine?
Lord, I, with all I have, am thine."

3 Thus where the gospel's preach'd,
And sinners eome to hear,
The hearts of some are reaeh'd
Before they are aware:
The word directly speaks to them,
And seems to point them out by name.

4 'Tis euriosity
Oft brings them in the way,
Only the man to see,
And hear what he can say:
But how the sinner starts to find,
The preaeher knows his inmost mind.

5 His long forgotten faults
Are brought again in view,
And all his seeret thoughts
Reveal'd in publie too;
Though compass'd with a erowd about,
The searehing word has found him out.

6 While thus distressing pain
And sorrow fills his heart:
He hears a voiee again,
That bids his fears depart.
Then, like Zaeeheus, he is blest,
And Jesus deigns to be his guest.

HYMN CVIII.

The Believer's Danger, Safety, and Duty. Chap. xxii. 31, 32.

1 "Simon, beware!" the Saviour said,
"Satan, your subtle foe,
Already has his measures laid,
Your soul to overthrow.

2 "He wants to sift you all as wheat,
And thinks his vietory sure;
But I his malice will defeat,
My prayer shall faith secure."

3 Believers, tremble and rejoiee,
Your help and danger view;
This warning has to you a voice,
This promise speaks to you.

4 Satan beholds, with jealous eye,
Your privilege and joy;
He 's always watchful, always nigh,
To tear and to destroy.

5 But Jesus lives to intercede,
That faith may still prevail;
He will support in time of need,
And Satan's art shall fail.

6 Yet let us not the warning slight,
But watchful still be found;
Though faith cannot be slain in fight,
It may receive a wound.

7 While Satan watches, dare we sleep?
We must our guard maintain;
But, Lord, do thou the city keep,
Or else we wateh in vain.*

HYMN CIX.

Father forgive them. Chap. xxiii. 34.

1 "Father, forgive," the Saviour said,
"They know not what they do;"
His heart was mov'd when thus he prayed
For me, my friends, and you.

2 He saw that, as the Jews abus'd
And crueified his flesh,
So he by us would be refus'd,
And erucified afresh.

3 Through love of sin, we long were prone
To aet as Satan bid;
But now, with grief and shame we own
We knew not what we did.

4 We knew not the desert of sin,
Nor whom we thus defied;
Nor where our guilty souls had been,
If Jesus had not died.

5 We knew not what a law we broke,
How holy, just, and pure!
Nor what a God we durst provoke,
But thought ourselves secure.

6 But Jesus all our guilt foresaw,
And shed his precious blood,
To satisfy the holy law,
And make our peaee with God.

7 My sin, dear Saviour, made thee bleed,
Yet didst thou pray for me!
I knew not what I did indeed,
When ignorant of thee.

HYMN CX.

The two Malefactors. Chap. xxiii. 39—43.

1 Sovereign graee has power alone
To subdue a heart of stone;
And the moment grace is felt,
Then the hardest heart will melt.

2 When the Lord was crucified,
Two transgressors with him died;
One with vile blaspheming tongue,
Seoff'd at Jesus as he hung.

3 Thus he spent his wieked breath,
In the very jaws of death;
Perish'd as too many do,
With the Saviour in his view.

4 But the other, toueh'd with graee,
Saw the danger of his ease;
Faith reeeiv'd to own the Lord,
Whom the scribes and priests abhorr'd.

* Psalm cxxvii. 1.

5 "Lord," he prayed, "remember me,
When in glory thou shalt be."
"Soon with me," the Lord replies,
"Thou shalt rest in Paradise."

6 This was wondrous grace indeed,
Grace vouchsaf'd in time of need;
Sinners, trust in Jesus' name,
You shall find him still the same.

7 But beware of unbelief,
Think upon the harden'd thief;
If the gospel you disdain,
Christ, to you, will die in vain.

JOHN.

HYMN CXI.

The Woman of Samaria. Chap. iv. 28.

1 JESUS, to what didst thou submit,
To save thy dear-bought flock from hell!
Like a poor traveller, see him sit,
Athirst and weary, by the well.

2 The woman who for water came,
(What great events on small depend!)
Then learnt the glory of his name,
The well of life, the sinner's friend.

3 Taught from her birth to hate the Jews,
And fill'd with party-pride, at first
Her zeal induc'd her to refuse
Water to quench the Saviour's thirst.

4 But soon she knew the gift of God;
And Jesus, whom she scorn'd before,
Unask'd, that drink on her bestowed,
Which whoso tastes shall thirst no more.

5 His words her prejudice remov'd,
Her sin she felt, relief she found;
She saw and heard, believ'd and lov'd,
And ran to tell her neighbours round.

6 O come, this wondrous man behold,
The promis'd Saviour! this is he
Whom ancient prophecies foretold,
Born, from our guilt to set us free.

7 Like her, in ignorance content,
I worshipp'd long I knew not what;
Like her, on other things intent,
I found him when I sought him not.

8 He told me all that e'er I did,
And told me all was pardon'd too;
And now, like her, as he has bid,
I live to point him out to you.

HYMN CXII.

*The Pool of Bethesda.** Chap. v. 2—4.

1 BESIDE the gospel-pool
Appointed for the poor,
From year to year my helpless soul
Has waited for a cure.

2 How often have I seen
The healing waters move,
And others, round me, stepping in,
Their efficacy prove!

3 But my complaints remain;
I feel the very same,
As full of guilt, and fear, and pain,
As when at first I came.

4 O would the Lord appear,
My malady to heal;
He knows how long I 've languish'd here,
And what distress I feel.

5 How often have I thought,
Why should I longer lie?
Surely the mercy I have sought
Is not for such as I.

6 But whither can I go?
There is no other pool
Where streams of sovereign virtue flow
To make a sinner whole.

7 Here then, from day to day,
I 'll wait, and hope, and try:
Can Jesus hear a sinner pray,
Yet suffer him to die?

8 No: he is full of grace;
He never will permit
A soul that fain would see his face,
To perish at his feet.

HYMN CXIII.

ANOTHER.

1 HERE at Bethesda's pool, the poor,
The wither'd, halt, and blind,
With waiting hearts expect a cure,
And free admittance find.

2 Here streams of wondrous virtue flow,
To heal a sin-sick soul;
To wash the filthy white as snow
And make the wounded whole.

3 The dumb break forth in songs of praise
The blind their sight receive,
The cripple run in wisdom's ways,
The dead revive and live.

4 Restrain'd to no one case or time,
These waters always move;
Sinners in ev'ry age and clime
Their vital influence prove.

5 Yet numbers daily near them lie,
Who meet with no relief;
With life in view, they pine and die,
In hopeless unbelief.

6 'Tis strange they should refuse to bathe,
And yet frequent the pool:
But none can even wish for faith
While love of sin bears rule.

7 Satan their consciences has seal'd,
And stupified their thought,
For, were they willing to be heal'd,
The cure would soon be wrought.

8 Do thou, dear Saviour, interpose,
Their stubborn will constrain;
Or else to them the water flows
And grace is preach'd in vain.

* Book III. Hymn vii.

HYMN CXIV.

*The Disciples at Sea.** Chap. vi. 16—21.

1 Constrain'd by their Lord to embark,
And venture without him to sea,
The season tempestuous and dark,
How griev'd the disciples must be!
But though he remain'd on the shore,
He spent the night for them in prayer;
They still were as safe as before,
And equally under his care.

2 They strove, though in vain, for a while,
The force of the waves to withstand;
But when they were wearied with toil,
They saw their dear Saviour at hand.
They gladly received him on board,
His presence their spirits reviv'd,
The sea became calm at his word,
And soon at their port they arriv'd.

3 We, like the disciples, are toss'd
By storms on a perilous deep,
But cannot be possibly lost,
For Jesus has charge of the ship.
Though billows and winds are enrag'd,
And threaten to make us their sport,
This pilot his word has engag'd
To bring us in safety to port.

4 If sometimes we struggle alone,
And he is withdrawn from our view,
It makes us more willing to own
We nothing without him can do:
Then Satan our hopes would assail,
But Jesus is still within call;
And when our poor efforts quite fail,
He comes in good time, and does all.

5 Yet, Lord, we are ready to shrink,
Unless we thy presence perceive;
O save us, we cry, or we sink,
We would, but we cannot believe.
The night has been long and severe,
The winds and the seas are still high;
Dear Saviour, this moment appear,
And say to our souls, "It is I!"†

HYMN CXV.

Will ye also go away? Chap. vi. 67—69.

1 When any turn from Zion's way,
(Alas! what numbers do!)
Methinks I hear my Saviour say,
"Wilt thou forsake me too?"

2 Ah! Lord, with such a heart as mine,
Unless thou hold me fast,
I feel I must, I shall decline,
And prove like them at last.

3 Yet thou alone hast power, I know,
To save a wretch like me:
To whom, or whither could I go,
If I should turn from thee?

4 Beyond a doubt I rest assur'd,
Thou art the Christ of God,
Who hast eternal life secur'd
By promise and by blood.

5 The help of men and angels join'd
Could never reach my case,
Nor can I hope relief to find
But in thy boundless grace.

6 No voice but thine can give me rest,
And bid my fears depart,
No love but thine can make me blest,
And satisfy my heart.

7 What anguish has that question stirr'd
If I will also go?
Yet, Lord, relying on thy word,
I humbly answer, No.

HYMN CXVI.

The Resurrection and the Life. Chap. xi. 25.

1 "I am," saith Christ, "your glorious Head,
(May we attention give!)
The resurrection of the dead,
The life of all that live.

2 "By faith in me the soul receives
New life, though dead before;
And he that in my name believes,
Shall live, to die no more.

3 "The sinner, sleeping in his grave,
Shall at my voice awake;
And when I once begin to save,
My work I ne'er forsake."

4 Fulfil thy promise, gracious Lord,
On us assembled here;
Put forth thy Spirit with the word,
And cause the dead to hear.

5 Preserve the power of faith alive
In those who love thy name;
For sin and Satan daily strive
To quench the sacred flame.

6 Thy power and mercy first prevail'd,
From death to set us free;
And often since our life had fail'd,
If not renew'd by thee.

7 To thee we look, to thee we bow,
To thee for help we call;
Our life and resurrection thou,
Our hope, our joy, our all.

HYMN CXVII.

Weeping Mary. Chap. xx. 11—16.

1 Mary to her Saviour's tomb
Hasted at the early dawn;
Spice she brought, and sweet perfume;
But the Lord she lov'd was gone.
For a while she weeping stood,
Struck with sorrow and surprise,
Shedding tears, a plenteous flood,
For her heart supplied her eyes.

2 Jesus, who is always near,
Though too often unperceiv'd,
Came, his drooping child to cheer,
Kindly asking why she griev'd?

* Book II. Hymn lxxxvii.
† Book III. Hymn xviii.

Though at first she knew him not,
When he call'd her by her name,
Then her griefs were all forgot,
For she found he was the same.

3 Grief and sighing quickly fled,
When she heard his welcome voice;
Just before she thought him dead,
Now he bids her heart rejoice.
What a change his word can make,
Turning darkness into day!
You who weep for Jesu's sake,
He will wipe your tears away.

4 He who came to comfort her,
When she thought her all was lost,
Will for you relief appear,
Though you now are tempest-toss'd,
On his word your burden cast,
On his love your thoughts employ;
Weeping for a while may last,
But the morning brings the joy.

HYMN CXVIII.

Lovest thou me? Chap. xxi. 16.

1 HARK, my soul! it is the Lord,
'Tis thy Saviour, hear his word;
Jesus speaks, and speaks to thee,
"Say, poor sinner, lov'st thou me?

2 "I deliver'd thee when bound,
And, when wounded, heal'd thy wound;
Sought thee wand'ring, set thee right,
Turn'd thy darkness into light.

3 "Can a woman's tender care
Cease towards the child she bare?
Yes, she may forgetful be,
Yet will I remember thee.

4 "Mine is an unchanging love,
Higher than the heights above,
Deeper than the depths beneath,
Free and faithful, strong as death,

5 "Thou shalt see my glory soon,
When the work of grace is done,
Partner of my throne shalt be,
Say, poor sinner, lov'st thou me?"

6 Lord, it is my chief complaint,
That my love is weak and faint;
Yet I love thee and adore:
O for grace to love thee more! C.

HYMN CXIX.

ANOTHER.

1 'TIS a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought,
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I his, or am I not?

2 If I love, why am I thus?
Why this dull and lifeless frame?
Hardly, sure, can they be worse,
Who have never heard his name.

3 Could my heart so hard remain,
Prayer a task and burden prove,
Ev'ry trifle give me pain,
If I knew a Saviour's love?

4 When I turn my eyes within,
All is dark, and vain, and wild;
Fill'd with unbelief and sin,
Can I deem myself a child!

5 If I pray, or hear, or read,
Sin is mix'd with all I do;
You that love the Lord indeed,
Tell me, is it thus with you?

6 Yet I mourn my stubborn will,
Find my sin a grief and thrall:
Should I grieve for what I feel,
If I did not love at all?

7 Could I joy his saints to meet,
Choose the ways I once abhorr'd,
Find at times the promise sweet,
If I did not love the Lord?

8 Lord, decide the doubtful case:
Thou, who art thy people's sun,
Shine upon thy work of grace,
If it be indeed begun.

9 Let me love thee more and more,
If I love at all, I pray;
If I have not lov'd before,
Help me to begin to-day.

ACTS.

HYMN CXX.

The Death of Stephen. Chap. vii. 54—60

1 As some tall rock amidst the waves,
The fury of the tempest braves,
While the fierce billows, tossing high,
Break at its foot, and, murm'ring, die:

2 Thus they who in the Lord confide,
Though foes assault on ev'ry side,
Cannot be mov'd or overthrown,
For Jesus makes their cause his own.

3 So faithful Stephen, undismayed,
The malice of the Jews surveyed:
The holy joy which fill'd his breast
A lustre on his face impress'd.

4 "Behold!" he said, "the world of light
Is open'd to my strengthen'd sight;
My glorious Lord appears in view,
That Jesus whom ye lately slew."

5 With such a friend and witness near,
No form of death could make him fear;
Calm, amidst showers of stones, he kneels,
And only for his murd'rers feels.

6 May we, by faith, perceive thee thus,
Dear Saviour, ever near to us!
This sight our peace through life shall keep,
And death be fear'd no more than sleep.

HYMN CXXI.

The Rebel's Surrender to Grace. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Chap. ix. 6.

1 LORD, thou hast won, at length I yield;
My heart, by mighty grace compell'd,
Surrenders all to thee;
Against thy terrors long I strove,
But who can stand against thy love?
Love conquers even me.

2 All that a wretch could do I tried,
Thy patience scorn'd, thy power defied,
And trampled on thy laws;
Scarcely thy martyrs at the stake,
Could stand more steadfast for thy sake,
Than I in Satan's cause.

3 But since thou hast thy love reveal'd
And shown my soul a pardon seal'd,
I can resist no more;
Couldst thou for such a sinner bleed?
Canst thou for such a rebel plead?
I wonder and adore!

4 If thou had'st bid thy thunders roll,
And lightnings flash, to blast my soul,
I still had stubborn been:
But mercy has my heart subdu'd,
A bleeding Saviour I have view'd,
And now I hate my sin.

5 Now, Lord, I would be thine alone,
Come, take possession of thine own,
For thou hast set me free;
Releas'd from Satan's hard command,
See all my powers waiting stand,
To be employed by thee.

6 My will conform'd to thine would move;
On thee my hope, desire, and love,
In fix'd attention join;
My hands, my eyes, my ears, my tongue,
Have Satan's servants been too long,
But now they shall be thine.

7 And can I be the very same,
Who lately durst blaspheme thy name,
And on thy gospel tread?
Surely each one who hears my case,
Will praise thee, and confess thy grace
Invincible indeed!

HYMN CXXII.

Peter released from Prison.
Chap. xii. 5—8.

1 FERVENT persevering prayers
Are faith's assur'd resource;
Brazen gates and iron bars
In vain withstand their force.
Peter, when in prison cast,
Though by soldiers kept with care,
Though the doors were bolted fast,
Was soon releas'd by prayer.

2 While he slept, an angel came,
And spread a light around,
Touch'd, and call'd him by his name,
And rais'd him from the ground.
All his chains and fetters burst,
Ev'ry door wide open flew:
Peter thought he dream'd at first,
But found the vision true.

3 Thus the Lord can make a way
To bring his saints relief;
Theirs it is to wait and pray,
In spite of unbelief.
He can break through walls of stone,
Sink the mountain to a plain;
They to whom his name is known,
Can never pray in vain.

4 Thus, in chains of guilt and sin,
Poor sinners sleeping lie;
No alarm is felt within,
Although condemn'd to die;
Till, descending from above,
(Mercy smiling in his eyes)
Jesus, with a voice of love,
Awakes, and bids them rise.

5 Glad the summons they obey,
And liberty desire;
Straight their fetters melt away,
Like wax before the fire:
By the word of him who died,
Guilty prisoners to release,
Every door flies open wide,
And they depart in peace.

HYMN CXXIII.

The trembling Gaoler. Chap. xvi. 29—31

1 A BELIEVER free from care,
May in chains or dungeons sing,
If the Lord be with him there,
And be happier than a king:
Paul and Silas thus confin'd,
Though their backs were torn by whips,
Yet, possessing peace of mind,
Sung his praise with joyful lips.

2 Suddenly the prison shook,
Open flew the iron doors;
And the gaoler, terror-struck,
Now his captives help implores:
Trembling at their feet he fell,
"Tell me, Sirs, what must I do,
To be saved from guilt and hell?
None can tell me this but you."

3 "Look to Jesus," they replied;
"If on him thou canst believe,
By the death which he hath died,
Thou salvation shalt receive."
While the living word he heard,
Faith sprang up within his heart;
And, releas'd from all he fear'd,
In their joy his soul had part.

4 Sinners, Christ is still the same,
O that you could likewise fear!
Then the mention of his name
Would be music to your ear:
Jesus rescues Satan's slaves,
His dear wounds still plead, "Forgive!"
Jesus to the utmost saves;
Sinners, look to him and live.

HYMN CXXIV.

The Exorcists. Chap. xix. 13—16.

1 WHEN the apostle wonders wrought,
And heal'd the sick in Jesu's name,
The sons of Sceva vainly thought
That they had power to do the same.

2 On one possess'd they tried their art,
And, naming Jesus preached by Paul,
They charg'd the spirit to depart,
Expecting he'd obey their call.

3 The spirit answered with a mock,
"Jesus I know, and Paul I know;
I must have gone if Paul had spoke:
But who are ye that bid me go?

4 With fury then the man he fill'd,
Who on the poor pretenders flew;
Naked and wounded, almost kill'd,
They fled in all the people's view.

5 Jesus! that name pronounc'd by faith,
Is full of wonder-working power;
It conquers Satan, sin, and death,
And cheers in trouble's darkest hour.

6 But they who are not born again,
Know nothing of it but the sound;
They do not take his name in vain,
When most their zeal and pains abound.

7 Satan their vain attempts derides,
Whether they talk, or pray, or preach;
Long as the love of sin abides,
His power is safe beyond their reach.

8 But you, believers, may rejoice,
Satan well knows your mighty Friend;
He trembles at your Saviour's voice,
And owns he cannot gain his end.

HYMN CXXV.

Paul's Voyage. Chap. xxvii.

1 IF Paul in Cæsar's court must stand,
He need not fear the sea;
Secur'd from harm on every hand
By the divine decree.

2 Although the ship in which he sail'd
By dreadful storms was toss'd;
The promise over all prevail'd,
And not a life was lost.

3 Jesus, the God whom Paul ador'd,
Who saves in time of need,
Was then confess'd, by all on board,
A present help indeed!

4 Though neither sun nor stars were seen,
Paul knew the Lord was near!
And faith preserv'd his soul serene,
When others shook for fear.

5 Believers thus are toss'd about,
On life's tempestuous main;
But grace assures, beyond a doubt
They shall their port attain.

6 They must, they shall appear one day,
Before their Saviour's throne;
The storms they meet with by the way,
But make his power known.

7 Their passage lies across the brink
Of many a threatening wave;
The world expects to see them sink,
But Jesus lives to save.

8 Lord, though we are but feeble worms,
Yet since thy word is past,
We 'll venture through a thousand storms,
To see thy face at last.

ROMANS.

HYMN CXXVI.

The good that I would, I do not.
Chap. vii. 19.

1 I WOULD, but cannot sing,
Guilt has untun'd my voice;
The serpent's sin-envenom'd sting
Has poison'd all my joys.

2 I know the Lord is nigh,
And would, but cannot pray;
For Satan meets me when I try,
And frights my soul away.

3 I would, but can't repent,
Though I endeavour oft;
This stony heart can ne'er relent,
Till Jesus make it soft.

4 I would, but cannot love,
Though wooed by love divine;
No arguments have power to move
A soul so base as mine.

5 I would, but cannot rest,
In God's most holy will;
I know what he appoints is best,
Yet murmur at it still.

6 Oh could I but believe!
Then all would easy be:
I would, but cannot,—Lord, relieve;
My help must come from thee!

7 But if indeed I would,
Though I can nothing do;
Yet the desire is something good,
For which my praise is due.

8 By nature prone to ill,
Till thine appointed hour,
I was as destitute of will,
As now I am of power.

9 Wilt thou not crown at length
The work thou hast begun?
And with a will, afford me strength,
In all thy ways to run?

HYMN CXXVII.

Salvation drawing nearer. Chap. xiii.

1 DARKNESS overspreads us here,
But the night wears fast away;
Jacob's Star will soon appear,
Leading on eternal day!
Now 'tis time to rouse from sleep,
Trim our lamps, and stand prepar'd
For our Lord strict watch to keep,
Lest he find us off our guard.

2 Let his people courage take,
Bear with a submissive mind
All they suffer for his sake,
Rich amends they soon will find:
He will wipe away their tears,
Near himself appoint their lot;
All their sorrows, pains, and fears,
Quickly then will be forgot.

3 Though already sav'd by grace,
From the hour we first believ'd;
Yet while sin and war have place,
We have but a part receiv'd;
Still we for salvation wait,
Every hour it nearer comes!
Death will break the prison gate,
And admit us to our homes.

4 Sinners, what can you expect?
You who now the Saviour dare,
Break his laws, his grace reject,
You must stand before his bar!
Tremble, lest he say, Depart!
Oh the horrors of that sound!
Lord, make every careless heart
Seek thee while thou may'st be found.

I. CORINTHIANS.

HYMN CXXVIII.

That Rock was Christ. Chap. x. 4.

1 When Israel's tribes were parch'd with thirst,
Forth from the rock the waters burst,
And all their future journey through
Yielded them drink, and gospel too!

2 In Moses' rod a type they saw
Of his severe and fiery law;
The smitten rock prefigur'd him
From whose pierc'd side all blessings [stream.

3 But, ah, the types were all too faint,
His sorrows or his worth to paint;
Slight was the stroke of Moses' rod,
But he endur'd the wrath of God.

4 Their outward rock could feel no pain,
But ours was wounded, torn, and slain;
The rock gave but a watery flood,
But Jesus pour'd forth streams of blood.

5 The earth is like their wilderness,
A land of drought and sore distress;
Without one stream from pole to pole,
To satisfy a thirsty soul.

6 But let the Saviour's praise resound;
In him refreshing streams are found;
Which pardon, strength, and comfort give,
And thirsty sinners drink and live.

II. CORINTHIANS.

HYMN CXXIX.

My Grace is sufficient for thee. Chap. xii. 9.

1 Oppress'd with unbelief and sin,
Fightings without, and fears within;
While earth and hell, with force combin'd,
Assault and terrify my mind:

2 What strength have I against such foes,
Such hosts and legions to oppose?
Alas! I tremble, faint, and fall;
Lord, save me, or I give up all.

3 Thus sorely press'd I sought the Lord,
To give me some sweet cheering word;
Again I sought, and yet again;
I waited long but not in vain.

4 Oh! 'twas a cheering word indeed!
Exactly suited to my need;
"Sufficient for thee is my grace;
Thy weakness my great power displays."

5 Now I despond and mourn no more,
I welcome all I fear'd before;
Though weak, I'm strong, though troubled, blest,
For Christ's own power shall on me rest.

6 My grace would soon exhausted be,
But his is boundless as the sea;
Then let me boast, with holy Paul,
That I am nothing, Christ is all.

GALATIANS.

HYMN CXXX.

The inward Warfare. Chap. v. 17.

1 Strange and mysterious is my life,
What opposites I feel within!
A stable peace, a constant strife;
The rule of grace, the power of sin:
Too often I am captive led,
Yet daily triumph in my Head.

2 I prize the privilege of prayer,
But oh! what backwardness to pray!
Though on the Lord I cast my care,
I feel its burden every day;
I seek his will in all I do,
Yet find my own is working too.

3 I call the promises my own,
And prize them more than mines of gold;
Yet though their sweetness I have known,
They leave me unimpress'd and cold:
One hour upon the truth I feed,
The next I know not what I read.

4 I love the holy day of rest,
When Jesus meets his gather'd saints:
Sweet day, of all the week the best!
For its return my spirit pants;
Yet often, through my unbelief,
It proves a day of guilt and grief.

5 While on my Saviour I rely,
I know my foes shall lose their aim,
And therefore dare their power defy,
Assur'd of conquest through his name;
But soon my confidence is slain,
And all my fears return again.

6 Thus diff'rent powers within me strive,
And grace and sin by turns prevail;

I grieve, rejoice, decline, revive,
And victory hangs in doubtful scale:
But Jesus has his promise past,
That grace shall overcome at last.

PHILIPPIANS.

HYMN CXXXI.

*Contentment.** Chap. iv. 11.

1 FIERCE passions discompose the mind,
As tempests vex the sea;
But calm content and peace we find,
When, Lord, we turn to thee.

2 In vain by reason and by rule
We try to bend the will;
For none but in the Saviour's school
Can learn the heavenly skill.

3 Since at his feet my soul has sat
His gracious words to hear,
Contented with my present state,
I cast on him my care.

4 "Art thou a sinner, soul?" he said,
"Then how canst thou complain?
How light thy troubles here, if weigh'd
With everlasting pain!

5 "If thou of murm'ring wouldst be cur'd,
Compare thy griefs with mine;
Think what my love for thee endur'd,
And thou wilt not repine.

6 "'Tis I appoint thy daily lot,
And I do all things well;
Thou soon shalt leave this wretched spot,
And rise with me to dwell.

7 "In life my grace shall strength supply,
Proportion'd to thy day
At death thou still shalt find me nigh
To wipe thy tears away."

8 Thus I, who once my wretched days
In vain repinings spent,
Taught in my Saviour's school of grace,
Have learn'd to be content. C.

HEBREWS.

HYMN CXXXII.

Old Testament Gospel. Chap. iv. 2.

1 ISRAEL, in ancient days,
Not only had a view
Of Sinai in a blaze,
But learn'd the gospel too:
The types and figures were a glass,
In which they saw the Saviour's face.

2 The paschal sacrifice,
And blood-besprinkled door,†
Seen with enlighten'd eyes,
And once applied with power,
Would teach the need of other blood,
To reconcile an angry God.

3 The lamb, the dove, set forth
His perfect innocence,*
Whose blood of matchless worth,
Should be the soul's defence;
For he who can for sin atone,
Must have no failings of his own.

4 The scape-goat on his head†
The people's trespass bore,
And to the desert led,
Was to be seen no more:
In him our Surety seem'd to say,
"Behold, I bear your sins away."

5 Dipt in his fellow's blood,
The living bird went free;‡
The type, well understood,
Express'd the sinner's plea;
Describ'd a guilty soul enlarg'd,
And by a Saviour's death discharg'd.

6 Jesus, I love to trace,
Throughout the sacred page,
The footsteps of thy grace,
The same in ev'ry age.
O grant that I may faithful be
To clearer light vouchsaf'd to me! C.

HYMN CXXXIII.

The Word quick and powerful.
Chap. iv. 12, 13.

1 THE word of Christ, our Lord,
With whom we have to do,
Is sharper than a two-edg'd sword,
To pierce the sinner through:

2 Swift as the lightning's blaze,
When awful thunders roll,
It fills the conscience with amaze,
And penetrates the soul.

3 No heart can be conceal'd
From his all-piercing eyes;
Each thought and purpose stands reveal'd,
Naked, without disguise.

4 He sees his people's fears,
He notes their mournful cry,
He counts their sighs and falling tears,
And helps them from on high.

5 Though feeble is their good,
It has its kind regard;
Yea, all they would do if they could,§
Shall find a sure reward.

6 He sees the wicked too,
And will repay them soon,
For all the evil deeds they do,
And all they would have done.‖

7 Since all our secret ways
Are mark'd and known by thee,
Afford us, Lord, thy light of grace,
That we ourselves may see.

* Book III. Hymn lv. † Exodus xii. 13.

* Lev. xii. 6. † Lev. xvi. 21. ‡ Lev. xiv. 51—53. § 1 Kings viii. 18. ‖ Matth. v. 28.

HYMN CXXXIV.

Looking unto Jesus. Chap. xii. 2.

1 By various maxims, forms, and rules,
That pass for wisdom in the schools,
I strove my passion to restrain,
But all my efforts prov'd in vain.

2 But since the Saviour I have known,
My rules are all reduc'd to one,
To keep my Lord, by faith, in view;
This strength supplies, and motives too.

3 I see him lead a suff'ring life,
Patient amidst reproach and strife;
And from his pattern courage take,
To bear and suffer for his sake.

4 Upon the cross I see him bleed,
And by the sight from guilt am freed;
This sight destroys the life of sin,
And quickens heavenly life within.

5 To look to Jesus as he rose,
Confirms my faith, disarms my foes;
Satan I shame and overcome,
By pointing to my Saviour's tomb.

6 Exalted on his glorious throne,
I see him make my cause his own;
Then all my anxious cares subside,
For Jesus lives, and will provide.

7 I see him look with pity down,
And hold in view the conq'ror's crown;
If press'd with griefs and cares before,
My soul revives, nor asks for more.

8 By faith I see the hour at hand,
When in his presence I shall stand;
Then it will be my endless bliss,
To see him where, and as he is.

HYMN CXXXV.

Love-tokens. Chap. xii. 5—11.

1 Afflictions do not come alone,
A voice attends the rod;
By both he to his saints is known,
A Father and a God!

2 "Let not my children slight the stroke
I for chastisement send,
Nor faint beneath my kind rebuke,
For still I am their friend.

3 "The wicked I perhaps may leave
A while, and not reprove;
But all the children I receive,
I scourge, because I love.

4 "If, therefore, you are left without
This needful discipline,
You might with cause admit a doubt,
If you, indeed, were mine.

5 "Shall earthly parents then expect
Their children to submit?
And will not you, when I correct,
Be humbled at my feet?

6 "To please themselves they oft chastise,
And put their sons to pain;
But you are precious in my eyes,
And shall not smart in vain.

7 "I see your hearts at present fill'd
With grief and deep distress;
But soon these bitter seeds shall yield
The fruits of righteousness."

8 Break through the clouds, dear Lord, and shine,
Let us perceive thee nigh!
And to each mourning child of thine
These gracious words apply.

REVELATION.

HYMN CXXXVI.

Ephesus. Chap. ii. 1—7.

1 Thus saith the Lord to Ephesus,
And thus he speaks to some of us:—
"Amidst my churches, lo, I stand,
And hold the pastors in my hand:

2 "Thy works to me are fully known,
Thy patience and thy toil I own;
Thy views of gospel-truth are clear,
Nor canst thou other doctrine bear.

3 "Yet I must blame while I approve;
Where is thy first, thy fervent love?
Dost thou forget my love to thee?
That thine is grown so faint to me!

4 "Recall to mind the happy days,
When thou wast fill'd with joy and praise,
Repent, thy former works renew,
Then I 'll restore thy comforts too.

5 "Return at once, when I reprove,
Lest I thy candlestick remove;
And thou, too late, thy loss lament,
I warn before I strike,—Repent."

6 Hearken to what the Spirit saith,
To him that overcomes by faith,
"The fruit of life's unfading tree,
In paradise his food shall be."

HYMN CXXXVII.

Smyrna. Chap. ii. 11.

1 The message first to Smyrna sent,
A message full of grace,
To all the Saviour's flock is meant,
In ev'ry age and place.

2 Thus to his church, his chosen bride
Saith the great First and Last,
Who ever lives, though once he died,
"Hold thy profession fast.

3 "Thy works and sorrow well I know
Perform'd and borne for me;
Poor though thou art, despis'd and low,
Yet who is rich like thee!

4 "I know thy foes, and what they say,
How long they have blasphem'd;
The synagogue of Satan they,
Though they would Jews be deem'd.

5 "Though Satan for a season rage,
And prisons be your lot,
I am your friend, and I engage
You shall not be forgot.

6 "Be faithful unto death, nor fear
A few short days of strife;
Behold! the prize you soon shall wear,
A crown of endless life!"

7 Hear what the Holy Spirit saith
Of all who overcome;
'They shall escape the second death,
The sinner's awful doom!"

HYMN CXXXVIII.

Sardis. Chap. iii. 1—6.

1 "WRITE to Sardis," saith the Lord,
And write what he declares,
He whose Spirit, and whose Word,
Uphold the seven stars:
"All thy works and ways I search,
Find thy zeal and love decayed;
Thou art call'd a living church,
But thou art cold and dead.

2 "Watch, remember, seek, and strive,
Exert thy former pains;
Let thy timely care revive
And strengthen what remains;
Cleanse thine heart, thy works amend,
Former times to mind recall,
Lest my sudden stroke descend,
And smite thee once for all.

3 "Yet I number now in thee
A few that are upright;
These my Father's face shall see,
And walk with me in white:
When in judgment I appear,
They for mine shall be confess'd:
Let my faithful servants hear,
And woe be to the rest!" C.

HYMN CXXXIX.

Philadelphia. Chap. iii. 7—13.

1 THUS saith the holy One and true,
To his beloved faithful few,
"Of heaven and hell I hold the keys,
To shut, or open, as I please.

2 "I know thy works, and I approve;
Though small thy strength, sincere thy love,
Go on, my word and name to own,
For none shall rob thee of thy crown.

3 "Before thee see my mercy's door
Stands open wide, to shut no more;
Fear not temptation's fiery day,
For I will be thy strength and stay.

4 "Thou hast my promise, hold it fast,
The trying hour will soon be past;
Rejoice, for, lo! I quickly come,
To take thee to my heavenly home.

5 "A pillar there, no more to move,
Inscrib'd with all my names of love
A monument of mighty grace,
Thou shalt for ever have a place."

6 Such is the conqueror's reward,
Prepar'd and promis'd by the Lord!
Let him that hath the ear of faith,
Attend to what the Spirit saith.

HYMN CXL.

Laodicea. Chap. iii. 14—20.

1 HEAR what the Lord, the great Amen,
The true and faithful witness says!
He form'd the vast creation's plan,
And searches all our hearts and ways.

2 To some he speaks, as once of old,
"I know thee, thy profession's vain:
Since thou art neither hot nor cold,
I 'll spit thee from me with disdain.

3 "Thou boasted, 'I am wise and rich,
Increas'd in goods, and nothing need;
And dost not know thou art a wretch,
Naked, and poor, and blind, and dead.

4 "Yet while I thus rebuke, I love,
My message is in mercy sent;
That thou may'st my compassion prove,
I can forgive if thou repent.

5 "Wouldst thou be truly rich and wise?
Come, buy my gold in fire well tried,
My ointment to anoint thine eyes,
My robe thy nakedness to hide.

6 "See at thy door I stand and knock!
Poor sinner, shall I wait in vain?
Quickly thy stubborn heart unlock,
That I may enter with my train.

7 "Thou canst not entertain a king,
Unworthy thou of such a guest,
But I my own provisions bring,
To make thy soul a heavenly feast."

HYMN CXLI.

*The Little Book.** Chap. x.

1 WHEN the belov'd disciple took
The angel's little open book,
Which, by the Lord's command, he ate,
It tasted bitter after sweet.

2 Thus when the gospel is embrac'd,
At first 'tis sweeter to the taste
Than honey, or the honey-comb,
But there 's a bitterness to come.

3 What sweetness does the promise yield,
When by the Spirit's power seal'd!
The longing soul is fill'd with good,
Nor feels a wish for other food.

4 By these inviting tastes allur'd
We pass to what must be endur'd;
For soon we find it is decreed,
That bitter must to sweet succeed.

5 When sin revives, and shows its power,
When Satan threatens to devour,
When God afflicts, and men revile,
We draw our steps with pain and toil.

* Book III. Hymn xxvii.

6 When thus deserted, tempest-toss'd,
The sense of former sweetness lost,
We tremble lest we were deceiv'd,
In thinking that we once believ'd.

7 The Lord first makes the sweetness known,
To win and fix us for his own;
And though we now some bitter meet,
We hope for everlasting sweet.

BOOK II.

ON OCCASIONAL SUBJECTS.

I. SEASONS.

NEW-YEAR HYMNS.

HYMN I.

Time how swift.

1 While with ceaseless course the sun
Hasted through the former year,
Many souls their race have run,
Never more to meet us here:
Fix'd in an eternal state,
They have done with all below;
We a little longer wait,
But how little none can know.

2 As the winged arrow flies,
Speedily the mark to find;
As the lightning from the skies
Darts, and leaves no trace behind:
Swiftly thus our fleeting days
Bear us down life's rapid stream;
Upwards, Lord, our spirits raise,
All below is but a dream.

3 Thanks for mercies past receive,
Pardon of our sins renew;
Teach us henceforth how to live,
With eternity in view:
Bless thy word to young and old,
Fill us with a Saviour's love;
And when life's short tale is told,
May we dwell with thee above.

HYMN II.

Time how short.

1 Time, with an unwearied hand,
Pushes round the seasons past:
And in life's frail glass the sand
Sinks apace, not long to last;
Many as well as you or I,
Who last year assembled thus,
In their silent graves now lie;
Graves will open soon for us.

2 Daily sin, and care, and strife,
While the Lord prolongs our breath,
Make it but a dying life,
Or a kind of living death:
Wretched they, and most forlorn,
Who no better portion know;
Better ne'er to have been born
Than to have our all below.

3 When constrain'd to go alone,
Leaving all you love behind,
Ent'ring on a world unknown,
What will then support your mind?
When the Lord his summons sends,*
Earthly comforts lose their power;
Honour, riches, kindred, friends,
Cannot cheer a dying hour.

4 Happy souls, who fear the Lord;
Time is not too swift for you;
When your Saviour gives the word.
Glad you 'll bid the world adieu:
Then he 'll wipe away your tears,
Near himself appoint your place;
Swifter fly, ye rolling years,
Lord, we long to see thy face.

HYMN III.

Uncertainty of Life.

1 See, another year is gone!
Quickly have the seasons pass'd!
This we enter now upon
May to many prove their last:
Mercy hitherto has spar'd,
But have mercies been improv'd?
Let us ask, Am I prepar'd,
Should I be this year remov'd?

2 Some we now no longer see,
Who their mortal race have run,
Seem'd as fair for life as we,
When the former year begun:
Some, but who God only knows,
Who are here assembled now,
Ere the present year shall close,
To the stroke of death must bow.

3 Life a field of battle is,
Thousands fall within our view,
And the next death-bolt that flies,
May be sent to me or you.
While we preach and while we near,
Help us, Lord, each one to think,
Vast eternity is near,
I am standing on the brink.

4 If, from guilt and sin set free,
By the knowledge of thy grace,
Welcome, then, the call will be,
To depart and see thy face.
To thy saints, while here below,
With new years, new mercies come;
But the happiest year they know,
Is their last, which leads them home.

HYMN IV.

A New-Year's Thought and Prayer.

1 Time by moments steals away,
First the hour, and then the day;
Small the daily loss appears,
Yet it soon amounts to years:

* Isaiah x. 3.

Thus another year is flown,
Now it is no more our own,
If it brought or promis'd good,
Than the years before the flood.

2 But (may none of us forget)
It has left us much in debt;
Favours from the Lord receiv'd,
Sins that have his Spirit griev'd,
Mark'd by an unerring hand,
In his book recorded stand:
Who can tell the vast amount
Plac'd to each of our account?

3 Happy the believing soul,
Christ for you has paid the whole:
While you own the debt is large,
You may plead a full discharge;
But, poor careless sinner, say,
What can you to justice pay?
Tremble, lest when life is past,
Into prison you be cast.

4 Will you still increase the score?
Still be careless as before?
O forbid it, gracious Lord!
Touch their spirits by thy word!
Now in mercy to them show
What a mighty debt they owe!
All their unbelief subdue,
Let them find forgiveness too.

5 Spar'd to see another year,
Let thy blessing meet us here:
Come, thy dying work revive,
Bid thy drooping garden thrive.
Sun of righteousness, arise!
Warm our hearts, and bless our eyes;
Let our prayer thy bowels move,
Make this year a time of love.

HYMN V.

Death and War. 1778.

1 HARK, how time's wide-sounding bell
Strikes on each attentive ear!
Tolling loud the solemn knell
Of the late departed year;
Years, like mortals, wear away,
Have their birth and dying day,
Youthful spring, and wintry age,
Then to others quit the stage.

2 Sad experience may relate
What a year the last has been!
Crops of sorrow have been great,
From the fruitful seeds of sin;
Oh! what numbers gay and blythe,
Fell by death's unsparing scythe!
While they thought the world their own,
Suddenly he mow'd them down.

3 See, how war, with dreadful stride,
Marches at the Lord's command,
Spreading desolation wide,
Through a once much favour'd land:
War, with heart and arms of steel,
Preys on thousands at a meal;
Daily drinking human gore,
Still he thirsts and calls for more.

4 If the God whom we provoke,
Hither should his way direct,
What a sin-avenging stroke
May a land like this expect!
They who now securely sleep,
Quickly then would wake and weep;
And too late would learn to fear,
When they saw the danger near.

5 You are safe who know his love,
He will all his truth perform;
To your souls a refuge prove,
From the rage of every storm:
But we tremble for the youth;
Teach them, Lord, thy saving truth;
Join them to thy faithful few,
Be to them a refuge too.

HYMN VI.

Earthly Prospects deceitful.

1 OFT in vain the voice of truth
Solemnly and loudly warns;
Thoughtless, unexperienc'd youth,
Though it hears, the warning scorns.
Youth in fancy's glass surveys
Life prolong'd to distant years,
While the vast imagin'd space
Fill'd with sweets and joys appears.

2 Awful disappointment soon
Overclouds the prospect gay;
Some their sun goes down at noon,
Torn by death's strong hand away:
Where are then their pleasing schemes?
Where the joys they hope to find?
Gone for ever, like their dreams,
Leaving not a trace behind.

3 Others, who are spar'd a while,
Live to weep o'er fancy's cheat;
Find distress, and pain, and toil,
Bitter things instead of sweet:
Sin has spread a curse around,
Poison'd all things here below;
On this base polluted ground,
Peace and joy can never grow.

4 Grace alone can cure our ills,
Sweeten life with all its cares;
Regulate our stubborn wills,
Save us from surrounding snares.
Though you oft have heard in vain,
Former years in folly spent,
Grace invites you yet again,
Once more calls you to repent.

5 Call'd again, at length, beware,
Hear the Saviour's voice, and live;
Lest he in his wrath should swear,
He no more will warning give.
Pray that you may hear and feel,
Ere the day of grace be past;
Lest your hearts grow hard as steel,
Or this year should prove your last.

HYMNS

BEFORE ANNUAL SERMONS TO YOUNG PEOPLE ON NEW-YEAR EVENINGS.

HYMN VII.

Prayer for a Blessing.

1 Now, gracious Lord, thine arm reveal,
And make thy glory known;
Now let us all thy presence feel,
And soften hearts of stone!

2 Help us to venture near thy throne,
And plead a Saviour's name;
For all that we can call our own,
Is vanity and shame.

3 From all the guilt of former sin
May mercy set us free;
And let the year we now begin,
Begin and end with thee.

4 Send down thy Spirit from above,
That saints may love thee more,
And sinners now may learn to love,
Who never lov'd before.

5 And when before thee we appear
In our eternal home,
May growing numbers worship here,
And praise thee in our room.

HYMN VIII.

ANOTHER.

1 Bestow, dear Lord, upon our youth,
The gift of saving grace;
And let the seed of sacred truth
Fall in a fruitful place.

2 Grace is a plant, where'er it grows,
Of pure and heavenly root;
But fairest in the youngest shows,
And yields the sweetest fruit.

3 Ye careless ones, O hear betimes
The voice of sovereign love!
Your youth is stain'd with many crimes,
But mercy reigns above.

4 True, you are young, but there 's a stone
Within the youngest breast,
Or half the crimes which you have done,
Would rob you of your rest.

5 For you the public prayer is made,
Oh! join the public prayer!
For you the sacred tear is shed,
O shed yourselves a tear!

6 We pray that you may early prove
The Spirit's power to teach;
You cannot be too young to love
That Jesus whom we preach. C.

HYMN IX.

ANOTHER.

1 Now may fervent prayer arise,
Wing'd with faith and pierce the skies;
Fervent prayer shall bring us down
Gracious answers from the throne.

2 Bless, O Lord, the op'ning year,
To each soul assembled here;
Clothe thy word with power divine,
Make us willing to be thine.

3 Shepherd of thy blood-bought sheep!
Teach the stony heart to weep:
Let the blind have eyes to see,
See themselves and look on thee!

4 Let the minds of all our youth
Feel the force of sacred truth;
While the gospel-call they hear,
May they learn to love and fear.

5 Show them what their ways have been,
Show them the desert of sin;
Then thy dying love reveal,
This shall melt a heart of steel.

6 Where thou hast thy work begun,
Give new strength the race to run;
Scatter darkness, doubts, and fears,
Wipe away the mourner's tears.

7 Bless us all, both old and young;
Call forth praise from every tongue;
Let the whole assembly prove
All thy power, and all thy love.

HYMN X.

Casting the Gospel-Net.

1 When Peter, through the tedious night,*
Had often cast his net in vain,
Soon as the Lord appear'd in sight,
He gladly let it down again.

2 Once more the gospel-net we cast,
Do thou, O Lord, the effort own;
We learn from disappointments past,
To rest our hope on thee alone.

3 Upheld by thy supporting hand,
We enter on another year;
And now we meet at thy command,
To seek thy gracious presence here.

4 May this be a much-favour'd hour
To souls in Satan's bondage led;
O clothe thy word with sovereign power
To break the rocks, and raise the dead!

5 Have mercy on our num'rous youth,
Who, young in years, are old in sin:
And by thy Spirit, and thy truth,
Show them the state their souls are in.

6 Then by a Saviour's dying love,
To every wounded heart reveal'd,
Temptations, fears, and guilt remove,
And be their sun, and strength, and shield.

7 To mourners speak a cheering word,
On seeking souls vouchsafe to shine;
Let poor backsliders be restor'd,
And all thy saints in praises join.

8 O hear our prayer, and give us hope,
That when thy voice shall call us home,
Thou still wilt raise a people up,
To love and praise thee in our room.

* Luke v. 4.

HYMN XI.

Pleading for and with Youth.

1 SIN has undone our wretched race,
But Jesus has restor'd,
And brought the sinner face to face
With his forgiving Lord.

2 This we repeat, from year to year,
And press upon our youth;
Lord, give them an attentive ear
Lord, save them by thy truth.

3 Blessings upon the rising race!
Make this a happy hour,
According to thy richest grace,
And thine almighty power.

4 We feel for your unhappy state,
(May you regard it too)
And would a while ourselves forget,
To pour out prayer for you.

5 We see, though you perceive it not,
The approaching, awful doom;
O tremble at the solemn thought,
And flee the wrath to come.

6 Dear Saviour, let this new-born year
Spread an alarm abroad;
And cry, in every careless ear,
"Prepare to meet thy God!" C.

HYMN XII.

Prayer for Children.

1 GRACIOUS Lord, our children see,
By thy mercy we are free;
But shall these, alas! remain,
Subjects still of Satan's reign;
Israel's young ones, when of old
Pharaoh threaten'd to withhold;
Then thy messenger said, "No,
Let the children also go."*

2 When the angel of the Lord,
Drawing forth his dreadful sword,
Slew, with an avenging hand,
All the first-born of the land;†
Then thy people's doors he pass'd,
Where the bloody sign was placed:
Hear us now, upon our knees,
Plead the blood of Christ for these!

3 Lord, we tremble, for we know
How the fierce malicious foe,
Wheeling round his watchful flight,
Keeps them ever in his sight:
Spread thy pinions, King of kings!
Hide them safe beneath thy wings;
Lest the rav'nous bird of prey
Stoop, and bear the brood away. C.

HYMN XIII.

The Shunamite.‡

1 THE Shunamite, oppress'd with grief,
When she had lost the son she lov'd,
Went to Elisha for relief,
Nor vain her application prov'd.

2 He sent his servant on before,
To lay a staff upon his head;
This he could do, but do no more;
He left him, as he found him—dead.

3 But when the Lord's almighty power
Wrought with the prophet's prayer and faith,
The mother saw a joyful hour,
She saw her child restor'd from death.

4 Thus, like the weeping Shunamite,
For many dead in sin we grieve;
Now, Lord, display thine arm of might,
Cause them to hear thy voice and live.

5 Thy preachers bear the staff in vain,
Though at thine own command we go;
Lord, we have tried and tried again,
We find them dead, and leave them so.

6 Come then thyself—to ev'ry heart
The glory of thy name make known;
The means are our appointed part,
The power and grace are thine alone.

HYMN XIV.

*Elijah's Prayer.**

1 DOES it not grief and wonder move,
To think of Israel's shameful fall?
Who needed miracles to prove
Whether the Lord was God or Baal!

2 Methinks I see Elijah stand,
His features glow with love and zeal:
In faith and prayer he lifts his hand,
And makes to heaven his great appeal.

3 "O God, if I thy servant am,
If 'tis thy message fills my heart,
Now glorify thy holy name,
And show this people who thou art!"

4 He spake, and, lo! a sudden flame
Consum'd the wood, the dust, the stone;
The people struck, at once proclaim,
"The Lord is God, the Lord alone."

5 Like him, we mourn, an awful day,
When more for Baal than God appear;
Like him, believers, let us pray,
And may the God of Israel hear!

6 Lord, if thy servant speak thy truth,
If he indeed is sent by thee,
Confirm the word to all our youth,
And let them thy salvation see.

7 Now may thy Spirit's holy fire
Pierce every heart that hears thy word,
Consume each hurtful vain desire,
And make them know thou art the Lord.

HYMN XV.

Preaching to the Dry Bones.†

1 PREACHERS may, from Ezekiel's case,
Draw hope in this declining day;
A proof, like this, of sovereign grace,
Should chase our unbelief away.

* Exod. x. 9. † Exod. xii. 13. ‡ 2 Kings iv. 31.

* 1 Kings xviii. † Ezek. xxxvii.

2 When sent to preach to mould'ring bones,
Who could have thought he would succeed,
But well he knew the Lord from stones
Could raise up Abrah'm's chosen seed.

3 Can these be made a num'rous host,
And such dry bones new life receive?
The prophet answer'd, "Lord, thou know'st
They shall, if thou commandment give."

4 Like him, around I cast my eye,
And, oh! what heaps of bones appear;
Like him, by Jesus sent, I 'll try,
For he can cause the dead to hear.

5 Hear, ye dry bones, the Saviour's word!
He, who, when dying, gasp'd, "Forgive,"
That gracious sinner-loving Lord
Says, "Look to me, dry bones, and live."

6 Thou heavenly wind, awake and blow,
In answer to the prayer of faith;
Now thine almighty influence show,
And fill dry bones with living breath.

7 O make them hear, and feel, and shake,
And at thy call obedient move;
The bonds of death and Satan break,
And bone to bone unite in love.

HYMN XVI.

The Rod of Moses.

1 When Moses wav'd his mystic rod,
What wonders follow'd while he spoke!
Firm as a wall the waters stood,*
Or gush'd in rivers from the rock!†

2 At his command the thunders roll'd,
Lightning and hail his voice obeyed,‡
And Pharaoh trembled to behold
His land in desolation laid.

3 But what could Moses' rod have done,
Had he not been divinely sent?
The power was from the Lord alone,
And Moses but the instrument.

4 O Lord, regard thy people's prayers!
Assist a worm to preach aright;
And since thy gospel-rod he bears,
Display thy wonders in our sight.

5 Proclaim the thunders of thy law,
Like lightning let thine arrows fly,
That careless sinners, struck with awe,
For refuge may to Jesus cry!

6 Make streams of godly sorrow flow
From rocky hearts, unus'd to feel;
And let the poor in spirit know,
That thou art near, their griefs to heal.

7 But chiefly, we would now look up
To ask a blessing for our youth,
The rising generation's hope,
That they may know and love thy truth.

8 Arise, O Lord, afford a sign,
Now shall our prayers success obtain;
Since both the means and power are thine,
How can the rod be rais'd in vain!

* Exod. xiv. 22. † Numb. xx. 11. ‡ Exod. ix. 23.

HYMN XVII.

God speaking from Mount Zion.

1 The God who once to Israel spoke
From Sinai's top, in fire and smoke,
In gentler strains of gospel-grace
Invites us now to seek his face.

2 He wears no terrors on his brow,
He speaks in love from Zion now;
It is the voice of Jesu's blood,
Calling poor wand'rers home to God.

3 The holy Moses quak'd and fear'd,
When Sinai's thund'ring law he heard;
But reigning grace, with accents mild,
Speaks to the sinner as a child.

4 Hark! how from Calvary it sounds,
From the Redeemer's bleeding wounds!
"Pardon and grace I freely give,
Poor sinner, look to me, and live."

5 What other arguments can move
The heart that slights a Saviour's love!
Yet, till almighty power constrain,
This matchless love is preach'd in vain.

6 O Saviour, let thy power be felt,
And cause each stony heart to melt!
Deeply impress upon our youth,
The light and force of gospel-truth.

7 With this new year may they begin
To live to thee, and die to sin;
To enter by the narrow way,
Which leads to everlasting day.

8 How will they else thy presence bear,
When, as a judge, thou shalt appear!
When slighted love to wrath shall turn,
And the whole earth like Sinai burn!

HYMN XVIII.

A Prayer for Power on the means of Grace.

1 O thou, at whose almighty word
The glorious light from darkness sprung,
Thy quick'ning influence afford,
And clothe with power the preacher's tongue.

2 Though 'tis thy truth he hopes to speak,
He cannot give the hearing ear;
'Tis thine the stubborn heart to break,
And make the careless sinner fear.

3 As when of old the water flow'd
Forth from the rock at thy command,*
Moses in vain had wav'd his rod,
Without thy wonder-working hand.

4 As when the walls of Jericho,†
Down to the earth at once were cast,
It was thy power that brought them low,
And not the trumpet's feeble blast.

5 Thus we would in the means be found,
And thus on thee alone depend,
To make the gospel's joyful sound
Effectual to the promis'd end.

* Numb. xx. 11. † Joshua vi. 20

6 Now, while we hear thy word of grace,
Let self and pride before it fall;
And rocky hearts dissolve apace,
In streams of sorrow at thy call.

7 On all our youth assembled here,
The unction of thy Spirit pour;
Nor let them lose another year,
Lest thou shouldst strive and call no more.

HYMN XIX.

Elijah's Mantle. 2 Kings ii. 11—14.

1 ELISHA, struck with grief and awe,
Cried, "Ah! where now is Israel's stay?"
When he his honour'd master saw
Borne by a fiery car away.

2 But while he look'd a last adieu,
His mantle, as it fell, he caught:
The Spirit rested on him too,
And equal miracles he wrought.

3 "Where is Elijah's God?" he cried,
And with the mantle smote the flood;
His word control'd the swelling tide,
The obedient waters upright stood.

4 The wonder-working gospel, thus
From hand to hand has been conveyed;
We have the mantle still with us,
But where, O where, the Spirit's aid?

5 When Peter first his mantle wav'd,*
How soon it melted hearts of steel!
Sinners by thousands then were sav'd,
But now how few its virtues feel?

6 Where is Elijah's God, the Lord,
Thine Israel's hope, and joy, and boast?
Reveal thine arm, confirm thy word,
Give us another Pentecost!

7 Assist thy messenger to speak,
And while he aims to lisp thy truth,
The bonds of sin and Satan break,
And pour thy blessing on our youth.

8 For them we now approach thy throne,
Teach them to know and love thy name;
Then shall thy thankful people own
Elijah's God is still the same.

HYMNS

AFTER SERMONS TO YOUNG PEOPLE ON NEW-YEAR EVENINGS, SUITED TO THE SUBJECTS.

HYMN XX.

David's Charge to Solomon.
1 Chron. xxviii. 9.

1 O DAVID'S Son, and David's Lord!
From age to age thou art the same;
Thy gracious presence now afford,
And teach our youth to know thy name.

2 Thy people, Lord, though oft distress'd
Upheld by thee. thus far are come;
And now we long to see thy rest,
And wait thy word to call us home.

3 Like David, when this life shall end,
We trust in thee, sure peace to find;
Like him, to thee we now commend
The children we must leave behind.

4 Ere long we hope to be where care,
And sin, and sorrow, never come;
But, oh! accept our humble prayer,
That these may praise thee in our room.

5 Show them how vile they are by sin,
And wash them in thy cleansing blood;
Oh! make them willing to be thine,
And be to them a covenant-God.

6 Long may thy light and truth remain,
To bless this place when we are gone,
And numbers here be born again,
To dwell for ever near thy throne.

HYMN XXI.

The Lord's Call to his Children.
2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.

1 LET us adore the grace that seeks
To draw our hearts above!
Attend, 'tis God the Saviour speaks,
And every word is love.

2 Though, fill'd with awe, before his throne
Each angel veils his face;
He claims a people for his own
Amongst our sinful race.

3 Careless, a while, they live in sin,
Enslav'd to Satan's power;
But they obey the call divine,
In his appointed hour.

4 "Come forth (he says,) no more pursue
The paths that lead to death:
Look up, a bleeding Saviour view;
Look, and be sav'd by faith.

5 "My sons and daughters you shall be,
Through the atoning blood;
And you shall claim, and find in me,
A Father and a God."

6 Lord, speak these words to ev'ry heart,
By thine all-powerful voice;
That we may now from sin depart,
And make thy love our choice.

7 If now we learn to seek thy face
By Christ the living way,
We'll praise thee for this hour of grace
Through an eternal day.

HYMN XXII.

The Prayer of Jabez. 1 Chron. iv. 9, 10.

1 JESUS, who bought us with his blood,
And makes our souls his care,
Was known of old as Israel's God,
And answer'd Jabez' prayer.

2 Jabez! a child of grief! the name
Befits poor sinners well;
For Jesus bore the cross and shame,
To save our souls from hell.

* Acts.

3 Teach us, O Lord, like him to plead
For mercies from above;
O come, and bless our souls indeed,
With light, and joy, and love.

4 The gospel's promis'd land is wide,
We fain would enter in;
But we are press'd on ev'ry side
With unbelief and sin.

5 Arise, O Lord, enlarge our coast,
Let us possess the whole,
That Satan may no longer boast,
He can thy work control.

6 Oh! may thy hand be with us still,
Our guide and guardian be,
To keep us safe from ev'ry ill,
Till death shall set us free.

7 Help us on thee to cast our care,
And on thy word to rest,
That Israel's God, who heareth prayer,
Will grant us our request.

HYMN XXIII.

Waiting at Wisdom's Gates.
Prov. viii. 34, 35.

1 Ensnar'd too long my heart has been
In Folly's hurtful ways;
Oh! may I now, at length, begin
To hear what Wisdom says!

2 'Tis Jesus, from the mercy-seat,
Invites me to his rest;
He calls poor sinners to his feet,
To make them truly bless'd.

3 Approach, my soul, to Wisdom's gates,
While it is call'd to-day;
No one who watches there, and waits,
Shall e'er be turn'd away.

4 He will not let me seek in vain,
For all who trust his word
Shall everlasting life obtain,
And favour from the Lord.

5 Lord, I have hated thee too long,
And dar'd thee to thy face;
I've done my soul exceeding wrong
In slighting all thy grace.

6 Now I would break my league with death,
And live to thee alone;
Oh! let thy Spirit's seal of faith
Secure me for thine own.

7 Let all the saints assembled here,
Yea, let all heaven rejoice,
That I begin with this new year
To make the Lord my choice.

HYMN XXIV.

Asking the way to Zion. Jer. l. 5.

1 Zion, the city of our God,
How glorious is the place!
The Saviour there has his abode,
And sinners see his face!

2 Firm against every adverse shock,
Its mighty bulwarks prove;
'Tis built upon the living Rock,
And wall'd around with love.

3 There all the fruits of glory grow,
And joys that never die;
And streams of grace and knowledge flow,
The soul to satisfy.

4 Come, set your faces Zion-ward,
The sacred road inquire;
And let a union to the Lord
Be henceforth your desire.

5 The gospel shines to give you light,
No longer, then, delay;
The Spirit waits to guide you right,
And Jesus is the way.

6 O Lord, regard thy people's prayer,
Thy promise now fulfil;
And young and old by grace prepare
To dwell on Zion's hill.

HYMN XXV.

We were Pharaoh's Bondmen.
Deut. vi. 20—23.

1 Beneath the tyrant Satan's yoke,
Our souls were long oppress'd:
Till grace our galling fetters broke,
And gave the weary rest.

2 Jesus, in that important hour,
His mighty arm made known:
He ransom'd us by price and power,
And claim'd us for his own.

3 Now, freed from bondage, sin, and death,
We walk in wisdom's ways;
And wish to spend our ev'ry breath
In wonder, love, and praise.

4 Ere long, we hope with him to dwell
In yonder world above;
And now we only live to tell
The riches of his love.

5 O might we, ere we hence remove,
Prevail upon our youth
To seek, that they may likewise prove
His mercy and his truth.

6 Like Simeon, we shall gladly go,*
When Jesus calls us home;
If they are left a seed below,
To serve him in our room.

7 Lord, hear our prayer, indulge our hope,
On these thy Spirit pour,
That they may take our story up,
When we can speak no more.

HYMN XXVI.

Travelling in Birth for Souls. Gal. iv. 19.

1 What contradictions meet
In ministers employ!
It is a bitter sweet,
A sorrow full of joy:

* Luke ii. 29.

No other post affords a place,
For equal honour or disgrace!

2 Who can describe the pain
Which faithful preachers feel,
Constrain'd to speak in vain,
To hearts as hard as steel!
Or who can tell the pleasures felt,
When stubborn hearts begin to melt

3 The Saviour's dying love,
The soul's amazing worth,
Their utmost efforts move,
And draw their bowels forth:
They pray, and strive, their rest departs,
Till Christ be form'd in sinners' hearts.

4 If some small hope appear,
They still are not content;
But, with a jealous fear,
They watch for the event:
Too oft they find their hopes deceiv'd,
Then how their inmost souls are griev'd!

5 But when their pains succeed,
And from the tender blade
The ripening ears proceed,
Their toils are overpaid:
No harvest-joy can equal theirs,
To find the fruit of all their cares.

6 On what has now been sown,
Thy blessing, Lord, bestow;
The power is thine alone,
To make it spring and grow:
Do thou the gracious harvest raise,
And thou alone shalt have the praise.

HYMN XXVII.

We are Ambassadors for Christ.
2 Cor. v. 20.

1 THY message by the preacher seal,
And let thy power be known,
That every sinner here may feel
The word is not his own.

2 Amongst the foremost of the throng,
Who dare thee to thy face,
He in rebellion stood too long,
And fought against thy grace.

3 But grace prevail'd, he mercy found,
And now by thee is sent,
To tell his fellow-rebels round,
And call them to repent.

4 In Jesus God is reconcil'd,
The worst may be forgiv'n;
Come and he 'll own you as a child,
And make you heirs of heaven.

5 O may the word of gospel-truth
Your chief desires engage!
And Jesus be your guide in youth,
Your joy in hoary age.

6 Perhaps the year that 's now begun
May prove to some their last:
The sands of life may soon be run,
The day of grace be past.

7 Think, if you slight this embassy,
And will not warning take,
When Jesus in the clouds you see,
What answer will you make?

HYMN XXVIII.

Paul's Farewell Charge. Acts xx. 26, 27.

1 WHEN Paul was parted from his friends,
It was a weeping day,
But Jesus made them all amends,
And wip'd their tears away.

2 Ere long they met again with joy,
(Secure no more to part,)
Where praises every tongue employ,
And pleasure fills each heart.

3 Thus all the preachers of his grace
Their children soon shall meet;
Together see their Saviour's face,
And worship at his feet.

4 But they who heard the word in vain,
Though oft and plainly warn'd,
Will tremble when they meet again
The ministers they scorn'd.

5 On your own heads your blood will fall,
If any perish here;
The preachers who have told you all,
Shall stand approv'd and clear.

6 Yet, Lord, to save themselves alone
Is not their utmost view;
Oh! hear their prayer, thy message own,
And save their hearers too.

HYMN XXIX.

How shall I put thee among the Children?
Jer. iii. 19.

1 ALAS! by nature how deprav'd,
How prone to ev'ry ill!
Our lives to Satan how enslav'd,
How obstinate our will!

2 And can such sinners be restor'd,
Such rebels reconcil'd?
Can grace itself the means afford,
To make a foe a child?

3 Yes, grace has found the wondrous means,
Which shall effectual prove,
To cleanse us from our countless sins,
And teach our hearts to love.

4 Jesus for sinners undertakes,
And died that we may live;
His blood a full atonement makes,
And cries aloud, "Forgive."

5 Yet one thing more must grace provide,
To bring us home to God,
Or we shall slight the Lord who died,
And trample on his blood.

6 The Holy Spirit must reveal
The Saviour's work and worth;
Then the hard heart begins to feel
A new and heavenly birth.

7 Thus bought with blood, and born again,
Redeem'd and sav'd by grace,
Rebels in God's own house obtain
A son's and daughter's place.

HYMN XXX.

*Winter.**

1 See how rude Winter's icy hand
Has strip'd the trees, and seal'd the ground!
But Spring shall soon his rage withstand,
And spread new beauties all around.

2 My soul a sharper winter mourns,
Barren and fruitless I remain;
When will the gentle spring return,
And bid my graces grow again?

3 Jesus, my glorious Sun, arise!
'Tis thine the frozen heart to move;
Oh! hush these storms, and clear my skies,
And let me feel thy vital love!

4 Dear Lord, regard my feeble cry,
I faint and droop till thou appear;
Wilt thou permit thy plant to die?
Must it be winter all the year?

5 Be still, my soul, and wait his hour,
With humble prayer and patient faith;
Till he reveals his gracious power,
Repose on what his promise saith.

6 He, by whose all-commanding word†
Seasons their changing course maintain,
In every change a pledge affords,
That none shall seek his face in vain.

HYMN XXXI.

Waiting for Spring.

1 Though cloudy skies and northern blasts
Retard the gentle spring a while,
The sun will conqueror prove at last,
And nature wear a vernal smile.

2 The promise, which from age to age,
Has brought the changing seasons round,
Again shall calm the winter's rage,
Perfume the air, and paint the ground.

3 The virtue of that first command,
I know still does and will prevail,
That while the earth itself shall stand,
The spring and summer shall not fail.

4 Such changes are for us decreed:
Believers have their winters too;
But spring shall certainly succeed,
And all their former life renew.

5 Winter and spring have each their use,
And each, in turn, his people know;
One kills the weeds their hearts produce,
The other makes their graces grow.

6 Though like dead trees a while they seem,
Yet, having life within their root,
The welcome spring's reviving beam
Draws forth their blossoms, leaves, and fruit.

7 But if the tree indeed be dead,
It feels no change, though spring return:
Its leafless, naked, barren head,
Proclaims it only fit to burn.

8 Dear Lord, afford our souls a spring,
Thou know'st our winter has been long;
Shine forth, and warm our hearts to sing,
Shine forth, and warm our hearts to sing,
And thy rich grace shall be our song.

HYMN XXXII.

Spring.

1 Bleak winter is subdu'd at length,
And forc'd to yield the day;
The sun has wasted all his strength,
And driven him away.

2 And now long wish'd for spring is come,
How alter'd is the scene!
The trees and shrubs are dress'd in bloom,
The earth arrayed in green.

3 Where'er we tread, beneath our feet,
The clust'ring flowers spring;
The artless birds, in concert sweet,
Invite our hearts to sing.

4 But, ah! in vain I strive to join,
Oppress'd with sin and doubt;
I feel 'tis winter still within,
Though all is spring without.

5 Oh! would my Saviour from on high
Break through these clouds and shine
No creature then more bless'd than I,
No song more loud than mine.

6 Till then no softly-warbling thrush,
Nor cowslip's sweet perfume,
Nor beauties of each painted bush,
Can dissipate my gloom.

7 To Adam, soon as he transgress'd,
Thus Eden bloom'd in vain;
Not paradise could give him rest,
Or soothe his heart-felt pain.

8 Yet here an emblem I perceive
Of what the Lord can do;
Dear Saviour, help me to believe,
That I may flourish too.

9 Thy word can soon my hopes revive,
Can overcome my foes,
And make my languid graces thrive,
And blossom like the rose.

HYMN XXXIII.

ANOTHER.

1 Pleasing spring again is here!
Trees and fields in bloom appear!
Hark! the birds, with artless lays,
Warble their Creator's praise!
Where, in winter, all was snow,
Now the flowers in clusters grow:
And the corn in green array,
Promises a harvest-day.

2 What a change has taken place!
Emblem of the spring of grace;
How the soul, in winter, mourns,
Till the Lord, the Sun, returns;

* Book III. Hymn xxxi.
† Gen. viii. 22

Till the Spirits gentle rain
Bids the heart revive again;
Then the stone is turn'd to flesh,
And each grace springs forth afresh.

3 Lord, afford a spring to me!
Let me feel like what I see;
Ah! my winter has been long,
Chill'd my hopes, and stopp'd my song!
Winter threaten'd to destroy
Faith, and love, and every joy;
If thy life was in the root,
Still I could not yield thee fruit.

4 Speak, and by thy gracious voice
Make my drooping soul rejoice;
O, beloved Saviour! haste,
Tell me all the storms are past;
On thy garden deign to smile,
Raise the plants, enrich the soil;
Soon thy presence will restore
Life to what seem'd dead before.

5 Lord, I long to be at home,
Where these changes never come!
Where the saints no winter fear,
Where 'tis spring throughout the year,
How unlike this state below!
There the flowers unwithering blow;
There no chilling blasts annoy,
All is love, and bloom, and joy.

HYMN XXXIV.

*Summer Storms.**

1 THOUGH the morn may be serene,
Not a threat'ning cloud be seen,
Who can undertake to say,
'Twill be pleasant all the day?
Tempests suddenly may rise,
Darkness overspread the skies,
Lightnings flash, and thunders roar,
Ere a short-liv'd day be o'er.

2 Often thus the child of grace
Enters on his christian race;
Guilt and fear are overborne,
'Tis with him a summer's morn:
While his new-felt joys abound,
All things seem to smile around;
And he hopes it will be fair,
All the day, and all the year.

3 Should we warn him of a change,
He would think the caution strange;
He no change or trouble fears,
Till the gathering storm appears;†
Till dark clouds his sun conceal,
Till temptation's power he feel;
Then he trembles and looks pale,
All his hopes and courage fail.

4 But the wonder-working Lord
Soothes the tempest by his word;
Stills the thunder, stops the rain,
And his sun breaks forth again:
Soon the cloud again returns,
Now he joys, and now he mourns;
Oft his sky is overcast,
Ere the day of life be past.

5 Tried believers too can say,
In the course of one short day,
Though the morning has been fair,
Prov'd a golden hour of prayer,
Sin and Satan, long ere night,
Have their comforts put to flight:
Ah! what heart-felt peace and joy
Unexpected storms destroy.

6 Dearest Saviour! call us soon
To thine high eternal noon;
Never there shall tempest rise,
To conceal thee from our eyes;
Satan shall no more deceive,
We no more thy Spirit grieve.
But through cloudless, endless days,
Sound, to golden harps, thy praise.

* Book III. Hymn lxviii. † Book I. Hymn xliv.

HYMN XXXV.

Hay-time.

1 THE grass and flowers which clothe the field,
And look so green and gay,
Touch'd by the scythe, defenceless yield,
And fall, and fade away.

2 Fit emblem of our mortal state!
Thus, in the scripture-glass,
The young, the strong, the wise, the great,
May see themselves but grass.*

3 Ah! trust not to your fleeting breath,
Nor call your time your own;
Around you see the scythe of death
Is mowing thousands down.

4 And you, who hitherto are spar'd,
Must shortly yield your lives;
Your wisdom is, to be prepar'd
Before the stroke arrives.

5 The grass, when dead, revives no more;
You die to live again;
But oh! if death should prove the door,
To everlasting pain!

6 Lord, help us to obey thy call,
That, from our sins set free,
When, like the grass, our bodies fall,
Our souls may spring to thee.

HYMN XXXVI.

Harvest.

1 SEE the corn again in ear!
How the fields and vallies smile!
Harvest now is drawing near,
To repay the farmer's toil:
Gracious Lord secure the crop,
Satisfy the poor with food;
In thy mercy is our hope,
We have sinn'd, but thou art good.

2 While I view the plenteous grain
As it ripens on the stalk,
May I not instruction gain,
Helpful to my daily walk?

* Isaiah xl. 7.

All this plenty of the field
Was produc'd from foreign seeds,
For the earth itself would yield
Only crops of useless weeds.

3 Though, when newly sown, it lay
Hid a while beneath the ground,
(Some might think it thrown away,)
Yet a large increase is found:
Though conceal'd, it was not lost,
Though it died, it lives again;
Eastern storms and nipping frosts
Have oppos'd its growth in vain.

4 Let the praise be all the Lord's,
As the benefit is ours:
He in season still affords
Kindly heat and gentle showers:
By his care the produce thrives,
Waving o'er the furrow'd lands,
And, when harvest-time arrives,
Ready for the reaper stands.

5 Thus in barren hearts he sows,
Precious seeds of heavenly joy;*
Sin and hell in vain oppose,
None can grace's crop destroy:
Threaten'd oft, yet still it blooms,
After many changes past,
Death, the reaper, when he comes,
Finds it fully ripe at last.

CHRISTMAS.

HYMN XXXVII.

Praise for the Incarnation.

1 Sweeter sounds than music knows,
Charm me in Emmanuel's name;
All her hopes my spirit owes
To his birth, and cross, and shame.

2 When he came the angels sung,
"Glory be to God on high!"
Lord, unloose my stamm'ring tongue,
Who should louder sing than I?

3 Did the Lord a man become
That he might the law fulfil,
Bleed and suffer in my room,
And canst thou, my tongue, be still?

4 No, I must my praises bring,
Though they worthless are and weak;
For, should I refuse to sing,
Sure the very stones would speak.

5 O my Saviour, Shield, and Sun,
Shepherd, Brother, Husband, Friend,
Ev'ry precious name in one,
I will love thee without end.

HYMN XXXVIII.

Jehovah-Jesus.

1 My song shall bless the Lord of all,
My praise shall climb to his abode;
Thee, Saviour, by that name I call,
The great, supreme, the mighty God.

2 Without beginning or decline,
Object of faith and not of sense;
Eternal ages saw him shine,
He shines eternal ages hence.

3 As much, when in the manger laid,
Almighty ruler of the sky,
As when the six days' work he made
Fill'd all the morning-stars with joy.

4 Of all the crowns Jehovah bears,
Salvation is his dearest claim,
That gracious sound well-pleas'd he hears,
And owns Emmanuel for his name.

5 A cheerful confidence I feel,
My well-plac'd hopes with joy I see;
My bosom glows with heavenly zeal,
To worship him who died for me.

6 As man, he pities my complaint,
His power and truth are all divine;
He will not fail, he cannot faint,
Salvation's sure, and must be mine. C.

HYMN XXXIX.

Man honoured above Angels.

1 Now let us join with hearts and tongues,
And emulate the angels' songs;
Yea, sinners may address their King
In songs that angels cannot sing.

2 They praise the Lamb who once was slain,
But we can add a higher strain,*
Not only say "He suffer'd thus,"
But that "He suffer'd all for us."

3 When angels by transgression fell,
Justice consign'd them all to hell;
But mercy form'd a wonderous plan,
To save and honour fallen man.

4 Jesus, who pass'd the angels by,†
Assum'd our flesh to bleed and die;
And still he makes it his abode,
As man, he fills the throne of God.

5 Our next of kin, our brother now,
Is he to whom the angels bow;
They join with us to praise his name,
But we the nearest interest claim.

6 But ah! how faint our praises rise!
Sure, 'tis the wonder of the skies,
That we, who share his richest love,
So cold and unconcern'd should prove.

7 O glorious hour, it comes with speed,
When we, from sin and darkness freed,
Shall see the God who died for man,
And praise him more than angels can.‡

HYMN XL.

Saturday Evening.

1 Safely through another week,
God has brought us on our way;

* Hosea xiv. 7; Mark iv. 26—29.

* Rev. v. † Heb. ii. 16.
‡ Book III. Hymn lxxxviii.

Let us now a blessing seek
On the approaching Sabbath day,
Day of all the week the best,
Emblem of eternal rest!

2 Mercies multiplied each hour
Through the week our praise demand;
Guarded by almighty power,
Fed and guided by his hand,
Though ungrateful we have been,
Only made returns of sin.

3 While we pray for pard'ning grace,
Through the dear Redeemer's name,
Show thy reconciled face,
Shine away our sin and shame;
From our worldly care set free,
May we rest this night with thee!

4 When the morn shall bid us rise,
May we feel thy presence near!
May thy glory meet our eyes
When we in thy house appear!
There afford us, Lord, a taste
Of our everlasting feast.

5 May thy gospel's joyful sound
Conquer sinners, comfort saints;
Make the fruits of grace abound,
Bring relief for all complaints:
Thus may all our Sabbaths prove
Till we join the church above!

THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR.

HYMN XLI.

*Ebenezer.**

1 THE Lord, our salvation and light,
The guide and the strength of our days,
Has brought us together to-night,
A new Ebenezer to raise:
The year we have now passed through,
His goodness with blessings has crown'd;
Each morning his mercies were new;
Then let our thanksgivings abound.

2 Encompass'd with dangers and snares,
Temptations, and fears, and complaints,
His ear he inclin'd to our prayers,
His hand open'd wide to our wants;
We never besought him in vain;
When burden'd with sorrow or sin,
He help'd us again and again,
Or where before now had we been?

3 His gospel, throughout the long year,
From Sabbath to Sabbath he gave;
How oft has he met with us here,
And shown himself mighty to save?
His candlestick has been remov'd
From churches once privileg'd thus;
But though we unworthy have prov'd,
It still is continued to us.

4 For so many mercies receiv'd,
Alas! what returns have we made?
His Spirit we often have griev'd,
And evil for good have repaid:
How well it becomes us to cry,
"O, who is a God like to thee
Who passeth iniquities by,
And plungest them deep in the sea!"

5 To Jesus, who sits on the throne,
Our best hallelujahs we bring;
To thee it is owing alone
That we are permitted to sing:
Assist us, we pray, to lament
The sins of the year that is past,
And grant that the next may be spent
Far more to thy praise than the last.

* 1 Sam. vii.

HYMN XLII.

ANOTHER.

1 LET hearts and tongues unite,
And loud thanksgivings raise;
'Tis duty, mingled with delight,
To sing the Saviour's praise.

2 To him we owe our breath,
He took us from the womb,
Which else had shut us up in death,
And prov'd an early tomb.

3 When on the breast we hung
Our help was in the Lord;
'Twas he first taught our infant tongue
To form the lisping word.

4 When in our blood we lay,
He would not let us die,
Because his love had fixed a day
To bring salvation nigh.

5 In childhood and in youth,
His eye was on us still;
Though strangers to his love and truth,
And prone to cross his will.

6 And since his name we knew,
How gracious has he been;
What dangers has he led us through,
What mercies have we seen!

7 Now through another year,
Supported by his care:
We raise our Ebenezer here,
"The Lord has help'd thus far."

8 Our lot in future years
Unable to foresee,
He kindly, to prevent our fears,
Says, "Leave it all to me."

9 Yea, Lord, we wish to cast
Our cares upon thy breast;
Help us to praise thee for the past,
And trust thee for the rest.

II. ORDINANCES.

HYMN XLIII.

On opening a Place for social Prayer.

1 O LORD, our languid souls inspire,
For here we trust thou art:

Send down a coal of heavenly fire,
To warm each waiting heart.

2 Dear Shepherd of thy people, hear,
Thy presence now display;
As thou hast given a place for prayer,
So give us hearts to pray.

3 Show us some tokens of thy love,
Our fainting hope to raise;
And pour thy blessings from above,
That we may render praise.

4 Within these walls let holy peace,
And love and concord dwell;
Here give the troubled conscience ease,
The wounded spirit heal.

5 The feeling heart, the melting eye,
The humbled mind bestow;
And shine upon us from on high,
To make our graces grow.

6 May we in faith receive thy word,
In faith present our prayers;
And, in the presence of our Lord,
Unbosom all our cares.

7 And may the gospel's joyful sound,
Enforc'd by mighty grace,
Awaken many sinners round,
To come and fill the place.

HYMN XLIV.

ANOTHER.

1 JESUS, where'er thy people meet,
There they behold thy mercy-seat;
Where'er they seek thee, thou art found,
And every place is hallow'd ground.

2 For thou, within no walls confin'd,
Inhabitest the humble mind;
Such ever bring thee where they come,
And going, take thee to their home.

3 Dear Shepherd of thy chosen few,
Thy former mercies here renew;
Here to our waiting hearts proclaim
The sweetness of thy saving name.

4 Here may we prove the power of prayer
To strengthen faith, and sweeten care;
To teach our faint desires to rise,
And bring all heaven before our eyes.

5 Behold, at thy commanding word,
We stretch the curtain and the cord;*
Come thou, and fill this wider space,
And bless us with a large increase.

6 Lord, we are few, but thou art near;
Nor short thine arm, nor deaf thine ear:
O rend the heavens, come quickly down,
And make a thousand hearts thine own!

C.

HYMN XLV.

The Lord's day.

1 How welcome to the saints, when press'd
With six days' noise, and care, and toil,
Is the returning day of rest,
Which hides them from the world a while!

2 Now, from the throng withdrawn away,
They seem to breathe a different air;
Compos'd and soften'd by the day,
All things another aspect wear.

3 How happy if their lot is cast,
Where statedly the gospel sounds!
The word is honey to their taste,
Renews their strength and heals their wounds.

4 Though pinch'd with poverty at home,
With sharp afflictions daily fed,
It makes amends, if they can come
To God's own house for heavenly bread.

5 With joy they hasten to the place
Where they their Saviour oft have met,
And while they feast upon his grace,
Their burdens and their griefs forget.

6 This favour'd lot, my friends, is ours;
May we the privilege improve,
And find these consecrated hours
Sweet earnests of the joys above!

7 We thank thee for thy day, O Lord;
Here we thy promis'd presence seek;
Open thine hand, with blessings stor'd,
And give us manna for the week.

HYMN XLVI.

Gospel-Privileges.

1 O HAPPY they who know the Lord,
With whom he deigns to dwell!
He feeds and cheers them by his word,
His arm supports them well.

2 To them in each distressing hour,
His throne of grace is near:
And when they plead his love and power
He stands engag'd to hear.

3 He help'd his saints in ancient days,
Who trusted in his name;
And we can witness to his praise,
His love is still the same.

4 Wand'ring in sin, our souls he found,
And bid us seek his face;
Gave us to hear the gospel-sound,
And taste the gospel-grace.

5 Oft in his house his glory shines,
Before our wond'ring eyes;
We wish not then for golden mines,
Or aught beneath the skies.

6 His presence sweetens all our cares,
And makes our burdens light;
A word from him dispels our fears,
And gilds the gloom of night.

7 Lord, we expect to suffer here,
Nor would we dare repine;
But give us still to find thee near,
And own us still for thine.

8 Let us enjoy and highly prize
These tokens of thy love,
Till thou shalt bid our spirits rise,
To worship thee above.

* Isaiah liv. 2.

HYMN XLVII.

ANOTHER.

1 HAPPY are they to whom the Lord
His gracious name makes known;
And by his Spirit, and his word,
Adopts them for his own.

2 He calls them to his mercy-seat,
And hears their humble prayer;
And when within his house they meet,
They find his presence near.

3 The force of their united cries
No power can long withstand;
For Jesus helps them from the skies,
By his almighty hand.

4 Then mountains sink at once to plains,
And light from darkness springs;
Each seeming loss improves their gains,
Each trouble comfort brings.

5 Though men despise them, or revile,
They count the trial small;
Whoever frowns, if Jesus smile,
It makes amends for all.

6 Though meanly clad, and coarsely fed,
And like their Saviour, poor,
They would not change their gospel-bread
For all the worldling's store.

7 When cheer'd with faith's sublimer joys,
They mount on eagles' wings,
They can disdain, as children's toys,
The pride and pomp of kings.

8 Dear Lord, assist our souls to pay
The debt of praise we owe,
That we enjoy a gospel-day,
And heaven begun below.

HYMN XLVIII.

*Praise for the Continuance of the Gospel.**

1 ONCE, while we aim'd at Zion's songs,
A sudden mourning check'd our tongues!
Then we were call'd to sow in tears,
The seeds of joy for future years.

2 Oft as that memorable hour
The changing year brings round again,
We meet to praise the love and power
Which heard our cries and eased our pain.

3 Come, ye who trembled for the ark,
Unite in praise for answer'd prayer!
Did not the Lord our sorrows mark?
Did not our sighing reach his ear?

4 Then smaller griefs were laid aside,
And all our cares summ'd up in one:
"Let us but have thy word," we cried,
"In other things thy will be done."

5 Since he has granted our request,
And we still hear the gospel-voice,
Although by many trials prest,
In this we can and will rejoice.

6 Though to our lot temptations fall,
Though pain, and want, and cares annoy,
The precious gospel sweetens all,
And yields us med'cine, food, and joy.

* Wherever a separation is threatened between a minister and people who dearly love each other, this Hymn may be as seasonable as it was once in Olney.

HYMN XLIX.

A Famine of the Word.

1 GLADNESS was spread through Israel's host
When first they manna viewed;
They labour'd who should gather most,
And thought it pleasant food.

2 But when they had it long enjoyed,
From day to day the same,
Their hearts were by the plenty cloyed,
Although from heaven it came.

3 Thus gospel-bread at first is priz'd,
And makes a people glad;
But afterwards too much despis'd,
When easy to be had.

4 But should the Lord, displeas'd, withhold
The bread his mercy sends,
To have our houses fill'd with gold,
Would make but poor amends.

5 How tedious would the week appear,
How dull the Sabbath prove,
Could we no longer meet to hear
The precious truths we love!

6 How would believing parents bear,
To leave their heedless youth
Expos'd to every fatal snare,
Without the light of truth!

7 The gospel, and a praying few,
Our bulwark long have prov'd;
But Olney sure the day will rue
When these shall be remov'd.

8 Then sin, in this once-favour'd town,
Will triumph unrestrain'd;
And wrath and vengeance hasten down,
No more by prayer detain'd.

9 Preserve us from this judgment, Lord,
For Jesus' sake we plead;
A famine of the gospel-word
Would be a stroke indeed!

HYMN L.

Prayer for Ministers.

1 CHIEF Shepherd of thy chosen sheep,
From death and sin set free!
May ev'ry under-shepherd keep
His eye intent on thee!

2 With plenteous grace their hearts prepare
To execute thy will;
Compassion, patience, love, and care,
And faithfulness, and skill.

3 Inflame their minds with holy zeal,
Their flocks to feed and teach;
And let them live, and let them feel
The sacred truths they preach.

4 Oh! never let the sheep complain
That toys, which fools amuse,

Ambition, pleasure, praise, or gain,
Debase the shepherd's views.

5 He that for these forbears to feed
The souls whom Jesus loves,
Whate'er he may profess or plead,
An idol shepherd proves.*

6 The sword of God shall break his arm,
A blast shall blind his eye;
His word shall have no power to warm,
His gifts shall all grow dry.

7 O Lord, avert this heavy woe,
Let all thy shepherds say!
And grace, and strength, on each bestow,
To labour while 'tis day.

HYMN LI.

Prayer for a Revival.

1 Saviour, visit thy plantation,
Grant us, Lord, a gracious rain!
All will come to desolation,
Unless thou return again:
Keep no longer at a distance,
Shine upon us from on high;
Lest, for want of thine assistance,
Ev'ry plant should droop and die.

2 Surely once thy garden flourish'd,
Ev'ry part look'd gay and green:
Then thy word our spirits nourish'd,
Happy seasons we have seen.
But a drought has since succeeded,
And a sad decline we see:
Lord, thy help is greatly needed;
Help can only come from thee.

3 Where are those we counted leaders,
Fill'd with zeal, and love, and truth?
Old professors, tall as cedars,
Bright examples to our youth!
Some, in whom we once delighted,
We shall meet no more below;
Some, alas! we fear are blighted,
Scarce a single leaf they show.

4 Younger plants—the sight how pleasant—
Cover'd thick with blossoms stood;
But they cause us grief at present,
Frosts have nipp'd them in the bud!
Dearest Saviour, hasten thither,
Thou canst make them bloom again;
Oh! permit them not to wither,
Let not all our hopes be vain!

5 Let our mutual love be fervent,
Make us prevalent in prayers:
Let each one esteem'd thy servant
Shun the world's bewitching snares:
Break the tempter's fatal power,
Turn the stony heart to flesh;
And begin from this good hour,
To revive thy work afresh.

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* Zech. xi. 17.

HYMN LII.

Hoping for a Revival.

1 My harp untun'd and laid aside,
(To cheerful hours the harp belongs)
My cruel foes insulting cried,
"Come, sing us one of Zion's songs."

2 Alas! when sinners, blindly bold,
At Zion scoff, and Zion's King;
When zeal declines, and love grows cold,
Is this a day for me to sing?

3 Time was, whene'er the saints I met,
With joy and praise my bosom glow'd;
But now, like Eli, sad I sit,
And tremble for the ark of God.

4 While thus to grief my soul gave way,
To see the work of God decline;
Methought I heard my Saviour say,
"Dismiss thy fears, the ark is mine.

5 "Though for a time I hide my face,
Rely upon my love and power;
Still wrestle at a throne of grace,
And wait for a reviving hour.

6 "Take down thy long-neglected harp,
I 've seen thy tears, and heard thy prayer,
The winter-season has been sharp,
But spring shall all its wastes repair."

7 Lord, I obey; my hopes revive;
Come, join with me, ye saints, and sing;
Our foes in vain against us strive,
For God will help and healing bring.

SACRAMENTAL HYMNS.

HYMN LIII.

Welcome to the Table.

1 This is the feast of heavenly wine,
And God invites to sup;
The juices of the living vine
Were press'd to fill the cup.

2 Oh! bless the Saviour, ye that eat,
With royal dainties fed;
Not heaven affords a costlier treat,
For Jesus is the bread.

3 The vile, the lost, he calls to them,
Ye trembling souls, appear!
The righteous in their own esteem
Have no acceptance here.

4 Approach, ye poor, nor dare refuse
The banquet spread for you;
Dear Saviour, this is welcome news,
Then I may venture too.

5 If guilt and sin afford a plea,
And may obtain a place,
Surely the Lord will welcome me,
And I shall see his face. C.

HYMN LIV.

Christ Crucified.

1 When on the cross my Lord I see,
Bleeding to death for wretched me,

Satan and sin no more can move,
For I am all transform'd to love.

2 His thorns and nails pierce thro' my heart,
In every groan I bear a part;
I view his wounds with streaming eyes;
But, see! he bows his head, and dies!

3 Come, sinners, view the Lamb of God,
Wounded, and dead, and bath'd in blood!
Behold his side, and venture near,
The well of endless life is here.

4 Here I forget my cares and pains;
I drink, yet still my thirst remains;
Only the fountain-head above
Can satisfy the thirst of love.

5 O that I thus could always feel!
Lord, more and more thy love reveal!
Then my glad tongue shall loud proclaim
The grace and glory of thy name.

6 Thy name dispels my guilt and fear,
Revives my heart and charms my ear:
Affords a balm for ev'ry wound,
And Satan trembles at the sound.

HYMN LV.

Jesus hasting to Suffer.

1 The Saviour, what a noble flame
Was kindled in his breast,
When, hasting to Jerusalem,
He march'd before the rest!

2 Good-will to men, and zeal for God,
His ev'ry thought engross;
He longs to be baptiz'd with blood,*
He pants to reach the cross.

3 With all his sufferings full in view,
And woes to us unknown,
Forth to the task his spirit flew,
'Twas love that urg'd him on.

4 Lord, we return thee what we can;
Our hearts shall sound abroad,
Salvation to the dying man,
And to the rising God!

5 And while thy bleeding glories here,
Engage our wond'ring eyes,
We learn our lighter cross to bear,
And hasten to the skies. C.

HYMN LVI.

It is good to be here.

1 Let me dwell on Golgotha,
Weep and love my life away:
While I see him on the tree,
Weep, and bleed, and die for me.

2 That dear blood, for sinners spilt,
Shows my sin in all its guilt:
Ah! my soul, he bore thy load;
Thou hast slain the Lamb of God.

3 Hark! his dying word, "Forgive,
Father, let the sinner live;
Sinner, wipe thy tears away,
I thy ransom freely pay."

4 While I hear this grace reveal'd,
And obtain a pardon seal'd,
All my soft affections move,
Weaken'd by the force of love.

5 Farewell, world! thy gold is dross,
Now I see the bleeding cross;
Jesus died to set me free
From the law, and sin, and thee!

6 He has dearly bought my soul;
Lord, accept, and claim the whole!
To thy will I all resign,
Now no more my own, but thine.

HYMN LVII.

Looking at the Cross.

1 In evil long I took delight,
Unaw'd by shame or fear,
Till a new object struck my sight,
And stopp'd my wild career.

2 I saw one hanging on a tree,
In agonies and blood,
Who fix'd his languid eyes on me,
As near his cross I stood.

3 Sure never till my latest breath
Can I forget that look;
It seem'd to charge me with his death,
Though not a word he spoke.

4 My conscience felt, and own'd the guilt,
And plung'd me in despair;
I saw my sins his blood had spilt,
And help'd to nail him there.

5 Alas! I knew not what I did;
But now my tears are vain;
Where shall my trembling soul be hid,
For I the Lord have slain.

6 Another look he gave, which said,
"I freely all forgive;
This blood is for thy ransom paid,
I die, that thou may'st live."

7 Thus, while his death my sin displays,
In all its blackest hue,
(Such is the mystery of grace,)
It seals my pardon too.

8 With pleasing grief, and mournful joy,
My spirit now is fill'd,
That I should such a life destroy,
Yet live by him I kill'd.

HYMN LVIII.

Supplies in the Wilderness.

1 When Israel, by divine command,
The pathless desert trod,
They found, though 'twas a barren land,
A sure resource in God.

2 A cloudy pillar mark'd their road,
And screen'd them from the heat;
From the hard rocks the water flow'd,
And manna was their meat.

* Luke xii. 50.

3 Like them, we have a rest in view,
Secure from adverse powers;
Like them, we pass a desert too;
But Israel's God is ours.

4 Yes, in this barren wilderness,
He is to us the same,
By his appointed means of grace,
As once he was to them.

5 His word a light before us spreads,
By which our path we see;
His love a banner o'er our heads,
From harm preserves us free.

6 Jesus, the bread of life, is given
To be our daily food:
We drink a wond'rous stream from heaven,
'Tis water, wine, and blood.

7 Lord, 'tis enough, I ask no more,
These blessings are divine;
I envy not the worldling's store,
If Christ and heaven are mine.

HYMN LIX.

Communion with the Saints in Glory.

1 Refreshed by the bread and wine,
The pledges of our Saviour's love:
Now let our hearts and voices join
In songs of praise with those above.

2 Do they sing, "Worthy is the Lamb?"
Although we cannot reach their strains,
Yet we, through grace, can sing the same,
For us he died, for us he reigns.

3 If they behold him face to face,
While we a glimpse can only see;
Yet equal debtors to his grace,
As safe and as belov'd are we.

4 They had, like us, a suffering time,
Our cares, and fears, and griefs they knew;
But they have conquer'd all through him,
And we ere long shall conquer too.

5 Though all the songs of saints in light
Are far beneath his matchless worth,
His grace is such, he will not slight
The poor attempts of worms on earth.

ON PRAYER.

HYMN LX.

Exhortation to Prayer.

1 What various hindrances we meet
In coming to a mercy-seat!
Yet who that knows the worth of prayer,
But wishes to be often there.

2 Prayer makes the darken'd cloud withdraw,
Prayer climbs the ladder Jacob saw,
Gives exercise to faith and love,
Brings ev'ry blessing from above.

3 Restraining prayer, we cease to fight;
Prayer makes the christian's armour bright;
And Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.

4 While Moses stood with arms spread wide,
Success was found on Israel's side;*
But when through weariness they fail'd,
That moment Amalek prevail'd.

5 Have you no words? ah! think again,
Words flow apace when you complain,
And fill your fellow-creature's ear,
With the sad tale of all your care.

6 Were half the breath thus vainly spent,
To heaven in supplication sent,
Your cheerful song would oft'ner be,
"Hear what the Lord has done for me."
C.

HYMN LXI.

Power of Prayer.

1 In themselves, as weak as worms,
How can poor believers stand,
When temptations, foes, and storms,
Press them close on ev'ry hand?

2 Weak, indeed, they feel they are,
But they know the throne of grace;
And the God who answers prayer,
Helps them when they seek his face.

3 Though the Lord a while delay,
Succour they at length obtain;
He who taught their hearts to pray,
Will not let them cry in vain.

4 Wrestling prayer can wonders do,
Bring relief in deepest straits;
Prayer can force a passage through
Iron bars and brazen gates.

5 Hezekiah on his knees
Proud Assyria's host subdued;
And when smitten with disease,
Had his life by prayer renewed.

6 Peter, though confin'd and chain'd,
Prayer prevail'd and brought him out;
When Elijah prayed, it rain'd,
After three long years of drought.

7 We can likewise witness bear,
That the Lord is still the same;
Though we fear'd he would not hear,
Suddenly deliverance came.

8 For the wonders he has wrought,
Let us now our praises give;
And by sweet experience taught,
Call upon him while we live.

ON THE SCRIPTURES.

HYMN LXII.

The Light and Glory of the World.

1 The Spirit breathes upon the word,
And brings the truth to sight;
Precepts and promises afford
A sanctifying light.

* Exod. xvii. 11.

2 A glory gilds the sacred page,
Majestic like the sun;
It gives a light to every age,
It gives, but borrows none.

3 The hand that gave it still supplies
The gracious light and heat;
His truths upon the nations rise,
They rise, but never set.

4 Let everlasting thanks be thine,
For such a bright display,
As makes a world of darkness shine
With beams of heavenly day.

5 My soul rejoices to pursue
The steps of him I love;
Till glory breaks upon my view
In brighter worlds above. C.

HYMN LXIII.

The Word more Precious than Gold.

1 PRECIOUS Bible! what a treasure
Does the word of God afford!
All I want for life or pleasure,
Food and med'cine, shield and sword:
Let the world account me poor,
Having this I need no more.

2 Food to which the world 's a stranger,
Here my hungry soul enjoys;
Of excess there is no danger,
Though it fills, it never cloys:
On a dying Christ I feed,
He is meat and drink indeed!

3 When my faith is faint and sickly,
Or when Satan wounds my mind,
Cordials to revive me quickly,
Healing med'cines here I find:
To the promises I flee,
Each affords a remedy.

4 In the hour of dark temptation,
Satan cannot make me yield;
For the word of consolation
Is to me a mighty shield:
While the scripture-truths are sure,
From his malice I 'm secure.

5 Vain his threats to overcome me,
When I take the spirit's sword;
Then, with ease, I drive him from me,
Satan trembles at the word:
'Tis a sword for conquest made,
Keen the edge, and strong the blade.

6 Shall I envy, then, the miser,
Doating on his golden store?
Sure I am, or should be wiser;
I am rich, 'tis he is poor:
Jesus gives me in his word,
Food and med'cine, shield and sword.

III. PROVIDENCES.

HYMN LXIV.

On the Commencement of Hostilities in America.

1 THE gath'ring clouds, with aspect dark,
A rising storm presage;
Oh! to be hid within the ark,
And shelter'd from its rage.

2 See the commission'd angel frown!*
That vial in his hand,
Fill'd with fierce wrath, is pouring down
Upon our guilty land!

3 Ye saints, unite in wrestling prayer,
If yet there may be hope;
Who knows but mercy yet may spare,
And bid the angel stop?†

4 Already is the plague begun,‡
And fired with hostile rage,
Brethren, by blood and interest one,
With brethren now engage.

5 Peace spreads her wings, prepar'd for flight,
And war, with flaming sword,
And hasty strides, draws nigh to fight
The battles of the Lord.

6 The first alarm, alas! how few,
While distant, seem to hear!
But they will hear, and tremble too,
When God shall send it near.

7 So thunder o'er the distant hills
Gives but a murm'ring sound;
But as the tempest spreads, it fills,
And shakes the welkin§ round.

8 May we at least, with one consent,
Fall low before the throne;
With tears the nation's sins lament,
The church's and our own.

9 The humble souls who mourn and pray,
The Lord approves and knows;
His mark secures them in the day
When vengeance strikes his foes.

FAST-DAY HYMNS.

HYMN LXV.

Confession and Prayer. Dec. 13, 1776.

1 OH! may the power which melts the rock,
Be felt by all assembled here!
Or else our service will but mock
The God whom we profess to fear!

2 Lord, while thy judgments shake the land,
Thy people's eyes are fixed on thee!
We own thy just uplifted hand,
Which thousands cannot, will not see.

3 How long hast thou bestow'd thy care
On this indulg'd ungrateful spot;
While other nations, far and near,
Have envied and admir'd our lot.

4 Here peace and liberty have dwelt,
The glorious gospel brightly shone;
And oft our enemies have felt
That God has made our cause his own.

5 But, ah! both heaven and earth have heard
Our vile requital of his love!
We, whom like children he has rear'd,
Rebels against his goodness prove.‖

* Rev. xvi. 1. † 1 Sam. xxiv. 16. ‡ Numb. xvi. 46.
§ Firmament or atmosphere. ‖ Isaiah i. 2.

6 His grace despis'd, his power defied
And legions of the blackest crimes,
Profaneness, riot, lust, and pride,
Are signs that mark the present times.

7 The Lord, displeas'd, has rais'd his rod;
Ah, where are now the faithful few,
Who tremble for the ark of God,
And know what Israel ought to do?*

8 Lord, hear thy people ev'rywhere,
Who meet to mourn, confess, and pray;
The nation and thy churches spare,
And let thy wrath be turn'd away.

HYMN LXVI.

Moses and Amalek.† Feb. 27, 1778.

1 While Joshua led the armed bands
Of Israel forth to war;
Moses apart, with lifted hands,
Engag'd in humble prayer.

2 The armed bands had quickly fail'd,
And perish'd in the fight,
If Moses' prayer had not prevail'd
To put the foes to flight.

3 When Moses' hands through weakness dropp'd,
The warriors fainted too;
Israel's success at once was stopp'd,
And Am'lek bolder grew.

4 A people, always prone to boast,
Were taught by this suspense,
That not a num'rous armed host,
But God, was their defence.

5 We now of fleets and armies vaunt,
And ships and men prepare;
But men like Moses most we want
To save the state by prayer.

6 Yet, Lord, we hope thou hast prepar'd
A hidden few to-day
(The nation's secret strength and guard)
To weep, and mourn, and pray.

7 O hear their prayers, and grant us aid!
Bid war and discord cease;
Heal the sad breach which sin has made,
And bless us all with peace.

HYMN LXVII.

The Hiding-place. Feb. 10, 1779.

1 See the gloomy gath'ring cloud
Hanging o'er a sinful land!
Sure the Lord proclaims aloud
Times of trouble are at hand.
Happy they who love his name;
They shall always find him near;
Though the earth were wrapt in flame,
They have no just cause for fear.

2 Hark, his voice in accents mild,
(O how comforting and sweet!)
Speaks to every humble child,
Pointing out a sure retreat!
"Come, and in my chambers hide,*
To my saints of old well known;
There you safely may abide,
Till the storm be overblown.

3 "You have only to repose
On my wisdom, love, and care;
When my wrath consumes my foes,
Mercy shall my children spare:
While they perish in the flood,
You that bear my holy mark,†
Sprinkled with atoning blood,
Shall be safe within the ark."

4 Sinners, see the ark prepar'd!
Haste to enter while there 's room;
Though the Lord his arm has bar'd
Mercy still retards your doom:
Seek him while there yet is hope,
Ere the day of grace be past,
Lest in wrath he give you up,
And this call should prove your last.'

HYMN LXVIII.

On the Earthquake. Sept. 8, 1775.

1 Although on massy pillars built,
The earth has lately shook;
It trembles under Britain's guilt,
Before its Maker's look.

2 Swift as the shock amazement spreads,
And sinners tremble too;
What flight can screen their guilty heads,
If earth itself pursue?

3 But mercy spar'd us while it warn'd,
The shock is felt no more;
And mercy now, alas! is scorn'd
By sinners, as before.

4 But if these warnings prove in vain,
Say, sinner, canst thou tell,
How soon the earth may quake again,
And open wide to hell?

5 Repent before the Judge draws nigh,
Or else when he comes down,
Thou wilt in vain for earthquakes cry
To hide thee from his frown.‡

6 But happy they who love the Lord,
And his salvation know;
The hope that 's founded on his word,
No change can overthrow.

7 Should the deep-rooted hills be hurl'd,
And plung'd beneath the seas,
And strong convulsions shake the world,
Your hearts may rest in peace.

8 Jesus, your Shepherd, Lord, and Chief,
Shall shelter you from ill;
And not a worm or shaking leaf
Can move, but at his will.

HYMN LXIX.

On the Fire at Olney. Sept. 22, 1777.

1 Wearied by day with toils and cares,
How welcome is the peaceful night!

* 1 Chron. xii. 32. † Exod. xvii. 9.

* Isaiah xxvi. 20. † Ezek. ix. 4. ‡ Rev. vi. 16.

Sweet sleep our wasted strength repairs,
And fits us for returning light.

2 Yet when our eyes in sleep are clos'd,
Our rest may break ere well begun;
To dangers ev'ry hour expos'd,
We neither can foresee nor shun.

3 'Tis of the Lord that we can sleep
A single night without alarms;
His eye alone our lives can keep
Secure amidst a thousand harms.

4 For months and years of safety past,
Ungrateful we, alas! have been;
Though patient long, he spoke at last,
And bid the fire rebuke our sin.

5 The shout of—Fire! a dreadful cry,
Impress'd each heart with deep dismay,
While the fierce blaze and redd'ning sky
Made midnight wear the face of day.

6 The throng and terror who can speak?
The various sounds that fill'd the air—
The infant's wail, the mother's shriek,
The voice of blasphemy and prayer.

7 But prayer prevail'd and sav'd the town:
The few who lov'd the Saviour's name
Were heard, and mercy hasted down
To change the wind and stop the flame.

8 O may that night be ne'er forgot!
Lord, still increase thy praying few!
Were Olney left without a Lot,
Ruin like Sodom's would ensue.

HYMN LXX.

A Welcome to Christian Friends.

1 KINDRED in Christ, for his dear sake,
A hearty welcome here receive;
May we together now partake
The joys which only he can give!

2 To you and us by grace 'tis given
To know the Saviour's precious name,
And shortly we shall meet in heaven,
Our hope, our way, our end the same.

3 May he, by whose kind care we meet,
Send his good Spirit from above,
Make our communications sweet,
And cause our hearts to burn with love!

4 Forgotten be each worldly theme,
When christians see each other thus;
We only wish to speak of him
Who liv'd and died, and reigns for us.

5 We 'll talk of all he did and said,
And suffer'd for us here below;
The path he mark'd for us to tread,
And what he 's doing for us now.

6 Thus, as the moments pass away,
We 'll love, and wonder, and adore,
And hasten on the glorious day,
When we shall meet to part no more.

HYMN LXXI.

At Parting.

1 As the sun's enliv'ning eye
Shines on ev'ry place the same;
So the Lord is always nigh
To the souls that love his name.

2 When they move at duty's call,
He is with them by the way:
He is ever with them all,
Those who go and those who stay.

3 From his holy mercy-seat
Nothing can their souls confine;
Still in spirit they may meet,
And in sweet communion join.

4 For a season call'd to part,
Let us then ourselves commend
To the gracious eye and heart
Of our ever-present Friend.

5 Jesus, hear our humble prayer!
Tender Shepherd of thy sheep!
Let thy mercy and thy care
All our souls in safety keep.

6 In thy strength may we be strong,
Sweeten ev'ry cross and pain;
Give us, if we live, ere long
Here to meet in peace again.

7 Then, if thou thy help afford,
Ebenezers shall be rear'd,
And our souls shall praise the Lord,
Who our poor petitions heard.

FUNERAL HYMNS.

HYMN LXXII.

On the Death of a Believer.

1 IN vain my fancy strives to paint
The moment after death,
The glories that surround the saints
When yielding up their breath.

2 One gentle sigh their fetters breaks;
We scarce can say, "They 're gone!"
Before the willing spirit takes
Her mansion near the throne.

3 Faith strives, but all its efforts fail,
To trace her in her flight;
No eyes can pierce within the vail,
Which hides that world of light.

4 Thus much (and this is all) we know,
They are completely blest,
Have done with sin, and care, and woe,
And with their Saviour rest.

5 On harps of gold they praise his name,
His face they always view;
Then let us follow'rs be of them
That we may praise him too.

6 Their faith and patience, love and zeal,
Should make their mem'ry dear;
And, Lord, do thou the prayers fulfil
They offer'd for us here!

7 While they have gain'd, we losers are,
We miss them day by day;
But thou canst ev'ry breach repair,
And wipe our tears away.

8 We pray, as in Elisha's case,
When great Elijah went,
May double portions of thy grace,
To us who stay be sent.

HYMN LXXIII.

On the Death of a Minister.

1 His master taken from his head,
Elisha saw him go,
And, in desponding accents said,
"Ah! what must Israel do?"

2 But he forgot the Lord who lifts
The beggar to the throne,
Nor knew that all Elijah's gifts
Would soon be made his own.

3 What! when a Paul has run his course,
Or when Apollos dies,
Is Israel left without resource?
And have we no supplies?

4 Yes! while the dear Redeemer lives,
We have a boundless store,
And shall be fed with what he gives,
Who lives for evermore. C.

HYMN LXXIV.

The Tolling Bell.

1 Oft as the bell, with solemn toll,
Speaks the departure of a soul,
Let each one ask himself "Am I
Prepar'd, should I be call'd to die?"

2 Only this frail and fleeting breath
Preserves me from the jaws of death:
Soon as it fails, at once I 'm gone,
And plung'd into a world unknown.

3 Then leaving all I lov'd below,
To God's tribunal I must go;
Must hear the Judge pronounce my fate,
And fix my everlasting state.

4 But could I bear to hear him say,
"Depart, accursed, far away!
With Satan in the lowest hell,
Thou art for ever doom'd to dwell."

5 Lord Jesus! help me now to flee,
And seek my hope alone in thee;
Apply thy blood, thy Spirit give,
Subdue my sin, and let me live.

6 Then, when the solemn bell I hear,
If sav'd from guilt, I need not fear;
Nor would the thought distressing be,
Perhaps it next may toll for me.

7 Rather my spirit would rejoice,
And long, and wish to hear thy voice,
Glad when it bids me earth resign,
Secure of heaven, if thou art mine.

HYMN LXXV.

Hope beyond the Grave.

1 My soul, this curious house of clay,
Thy present frail abode,
Must quickly fall to worms a prey,
And thou return to God.

2 Canst thou, by faith, survey with joy
The change before it come?
And say, "Let death this house destroy
I have a heavenly home!

3 "The Saviour whom I then shall see
With new-admiring eyes,
Already has prepar'd for me
A mansion in the skies."*

4 I feel this mud-wall'd cottage shake,
And long to see it fall;
That I my willing flight may take
To him who is my all.

5 Burden'd and groaning then no more,
My rescu'd soul shall sing,
As up the shining path I soar,
"Death thou hast lost thy sting."

6 Dear Saviour help us now to seek
And know thy grace's power,
That we may all this language speak,
Before the dying hour.

HYMN LXXVI.

There the Weary are at Rest.

1 Courage, my soul! behold the prize
The Saviour's love provides—
Eternal life beyond the skies
For all whom here he guides.

2 The wicked cease from troubling there,
The weary are at rest;†
Sorrow, and sin, and pain, and care,
No more approach the blest.

3 A wicked world, and wicked heart,
With Satan now are join'd;
Each acts a too successful part
In harassing my mind.

4 In conflict with this threefold troop,
How weary, Lord, am I!
Did not thy promise bear me up,
My soul must faint and die.

5 But fighting in my Saviour's strength,
Though mighty are my foes,
I shall a conq'ror be at length
O'er all that can oppose.

6 Then why, my soul, complain or fear?
The crown of glory see!
The more I toil and suffer here,
The sweeter rest will be.

HYMN LXXVII.

The Day of Judgment.

1 Day of judgment, day of wonders!
Hark! the trumpet's awful sound,

* 2 Cor. v. 1. † Job iii. 17

Louder than a thousand thunders,
Shakes the vast creation round! [confound!
How the summons will the sinner's heart

2 See the Judge our nature wearing,
Cloth'd in majesty divine!
You who long for his appearing,
Then shall say, This God is mine! [thine!
Gracious Saviour, own me in that day for

3 At his call the dead awaken,
Rise to life from earth and sea:
All the powers of nature shaken,
By his looks prepare to flee; [thee?
Careless sinner! what will then become of

4 Horrors past imagination
Will surprise your trembling heart,
When you hear your condemnation,
"Hence, accursed wretch, depart! [part!"
Thou with Satan and his angels have thy

5 Satan, who now tries to please you,
Lest you timely warning take,
When that word is past, will seize you,
Plunge you in the burning lake:
Think, poor sinner, thy eternal all 's at stake.

6 But to those who have confessed,
Lov'd and serv'd the Lord below,
He will say, "Come near, ye blessed,
See the kingdom I bestow:
You for ever shall my love and glory know."

7 Under sorrows and reproaches,
May this thought your courage raise!
Swiftly God's great day approaches,
Sighs shall then be chang'd to praise:
We shall triumph when the world 's in a blaze.

HYMN LXXVIII.

*The Day of the Lord.**

1 GOD, with one piercing glance looks thro'
Creation's wide extended frame;
The past and future in his view,
And days and ages are the same.†

2 Sinners who dare provoke his face,
Who on his patience long presume,
And trifle out his day of grace,
Will find he has a day of doom.

3 As pangs the lab'ring woman feels,
Or as the thief, in midnight sleep;
So comes that day, for which the wheels
Of time their ceaseless motion keep!

4 Hark! from the sky the trump proclaims
Jesus the Judge approaching nigh!
See, the creation wrapt in flames,
First kindled by his vengeful eye!

5 When thus the mountains melt like wax;
When earth, and air, and sea, shall burn;
When all the frame of nature breaks,
Poor sinner, whither wilt thou turn?

6 The puny works which feeble men
Now boast, or covet, or admire;
Their pomp and arts, and treasures, then
Shall perish in one common fire.

7 Lord, fix our hearts and hopes above!
Since all below to ruin tends;
Here may we trust, obey, and love,
And there be found amongst thy friends.

HYMN LXXIX.

*The great Tribunal.**

1 JOHN, in vision, saw the day
When the Judge will hasten down;
Heaven and earth shall flee away
From the terror of his frown;
Dead and living, small and great,
Raised from the earth and sea,
At his bar shall hear their fate—
What will then become of me?

2 Can I bear his awful looks?
Shall I stand in judgment then,
When I see the open'd books,
Written by the Almighty's pen?
If he to remembrance bring,
And expose to public view,
Ev'ry work and secret thing,
Ah! my soul, what canst thou do?

3 When the list shall be produc'd
Of the talents I enjoyed;
Means and mercies, how abus'd!
Time and strength, how misemployed:
Conscience then, compell'd to read,
Must allow the charge is true;
Say, my soul, what canst thou plead?
In that hour, what wilt thou do?

4 But the book of life I see,
May my name be written there!
Then from gilt and danger free,
Glad I 'll meet him in the air:
That 's the book I hope to plead,
'Tis the gospel open'd wide;
Lord, I am a wretch indeed!
I have sinn'd, but thou hast died.†

5 Now my soul knows what to do;
Thus I shall with boldness stand,
Number'd with the faithful few,
Own'd and sav'd at thy right-hand:
If thou help a feeble worm
To believe thy promise now,
Justice will at last confirm
What thy mercy wrought below.

IV. CREATION.

HYMN LXXX.

The Old and New Creation.

1 THAT was a wonder-working word
Which could the vast creation raise?
Angels, attendant on their Lord,‡
Admir'd the plan, and sung his praise.

2 From what a dark and shapeless mass,
All nature sprung at his command!
Let there be light, and light there was,
And sun, and stars, and sea, and land.

* Book III. Hymn iv. † 2 Pet. iii. 8—10.

* Rev. xx. 11, 12. † Rom. viii. 34. ‡ Job xxxviii. 7.

3 With equal speed the earth and seas
Their mighty Maker's voice obeyed;
He spake, and straight the plants and trees,
And birds, and beasts, and men were made.

4 But man, the lord and crown of all,
By sin his honour soon defac'd;
His heart (how alter'd since the fall!)
Is dark, deform'd, and void, and waste.

5 The new creation of the soul
Does now no less his power display,*
Than when he form'd the mighty whole,
And kindled darkness into day.

6 Though, self-destroyed, O Lord, we are,
Yet let us feel what thou canst do;
Thy word the ruin can repair,
And all our hearts create anew.

HYMN LXXXI.

The Book of Creation.

1 The book of nature open lies,
With much instruction stor'd;
But till the Lord anoints our eyes,
We cannot read a word.

2 Philosophers have por'd in vain,
And guess'd from age to age:
For reason's eye could ne'er attain
To understand a page.

3 Though to each star they give a name,
Its size and motions teach;
The truths which all the stars proclaim,
Their wisdom cannot reach.

4 With skill to measure earth and sea,
And weigh the subtile air;
They cannot, Lord, discover thee,
Though present ev'rywhere.

5 The knowledge of the saints excels
The wisdom of the schools;
To them his secrets God reveals,
Though men account them fools.

6 To them the sun and stars on high,
The flowers that paint the field,†
And all the artless birds that fly,
Divine instruction yield.

7 The creatures on their senses press,
As witnesses to prove
Their Saviour's power and faithfulness,
His providence and love.

8 Thus may we study nature's book,
To make us wise indeed!
And pity those who only look
At what they cannot read.‡

HYMN LXXXII.

The Rainbow.

1 When the sun, with cheerful beams,
Smiles upon a low'ring sky,
Soon its aspect soften'd seems,
And a rainbow meets the eye:
While the sky remains serene,
This bright arch is never seen.

2 Thus the Lord's supporting power
Brightest to his saints appears,
When affliction's threat'ning hour
Fills the sky with clouds and fears,
He can wonders then perform,
Paint a rainbow on the storm.*

3 All their graces doubly shine,
When their troubles press them sore;
And the promises divine
Give them joys unknown before:
As the colours of the bow
To the cloud their brightness owe.

4 Favour'd John a rainbow saw,†
Circling round the throne above;
Hence the saints a pledge may draw
Of unchanging cov'nant love:
Clouds a while may intervene,
But the bow will still be seen.

HYMN LXXXIII.

Thunder.

1 When a black o'erspreading cloud
Has darken'd all the air,
And peals of thunder, roaring loud,
Proclaim the tempest near;

2 Then guilt and fear, the fruits of sin,
The sinner oft pursue:
A louder storm is heard within,
And conscience thunders too.

3 The law a fiery language speaks,
His danger he perceives;
Like Satan, who his ruin seeks,
He trembles and believes.

4 But when the sky serene appears,
And thunders roll no more,
He soon forgets his vows and fears,
Just as he did before.

5 But whither shall the sinner flee,
When nature's mighty frame,
The pond'rous earth, and air, and sea,‡
Shall all dissolve in flame?

6 Amazing day! it comes apace;
The Judge is hasting down:
Will sinners bear to see his face,
Or stand before his frown?

7 Lord, let thy mercy find a way
To touch each stubborn heart;
That they may never hear thee say,
"Ye cursed ones, depart."

8 Believers, you may well rejoice!
The thunder's loudest strains
Should be to you a welcome voice,
That tells you, "Jesus reigns."

HYMN LXXXIV.

Lightning in the Night.

1 A glance from heaven with sweet effect
Sometimes my pensive spirit cheers;
But ere I can my thoughts collect,
As suddenly it disappears.

* 2 Cor. iv. 6. † Matth. vi, 26—28. ‡ Rom. i. 20.

* Gen. ix. 14. † Rev. iv. 3. ‡ 2 Pet. iii. 10.

2 So lightning in the gloom of night
Affords a momentary day;
Disclosing objects full in sight,
Which, soon as seen, are snatch'd away.

3 Ah! what avail these pleasing scenes?
They do but aggravate my pain;
While darkness quickly intervenes,
And swallows up my joys again.

4 But shall I murmur at relief?
Though short, it was a precious view
Sent to control my unbelief,
And prove that what I read is true.

5 The lightning's flash did not create
The op'ning prospect it reveal'd;
But only show'd the real state
Of what the darkness had conceal'd.

6 Just so, we by a glimpse discern
The glorious things within the vail;
That, when in darkness, we may learn
To live by faith, till light prevail.

7 The Lord's great day will soon advance,
Dispersing all the shades of night;
Then we no more shall need a glance,
But see by an eternal light.

HYMN LXXXV.

On the Eclipse of the Moon, July 30, 1776.

1 THE moon in silver glory shone,
And not a cloud in sight,
When suddenly a shade begun
To intercept her light.

2 How fast across her orb it spread,
How fast her light withdrew!
A circle, ting'd with languid red,
Was all appear'd in view.

3 While many with unmeaning eye,
Gaze on thy works in vain,
Assist me, Lord, that I may try
Instruction to obtain.

4 Fain would my thankful heart and lips
Unite in praise to thee,
And meditate on thy eclipse
In sad Gethsemane.

5 Thy people's guilt, a heavy load,
(When standing in their room)
Depriv'd thee of the light of God,
And fill'd thy soul with gloom.

6 How punctually eclipses move,
Obedient to thy will!
Thus shall thy faithfulness and love
Thy promises fulfil.

7 Dark like the moon without the sun,
I mourn thine absence, Lord!
For light or comfort I have none,
But what thy beams afford.

8 But lo! the hour draws near apace,
When changes shall be o'er,
Then I shall see thee face to face,
And be eclips'd no more.

HYMN LXXXVI.

Moon-Light.

1 THE moon has but a borrow'd light,
A faint and feeble ray;
She owes her beauty to the night,
And hides herself by day.

2 No cheering warmth her beam conveys,
Though pleasing to behold;
We might upon her brightness gaze
Till we were starv'd with cold.

3 Just such is all the light to man
Which reason can impart;
It cannot show one object plain,
Nor warm the frozen heart.

4 Thus moon-light views of truths divine
To many fatal prove,
For what avail in gifts to shine,*
Without a spark of love?

5 The gospel, like the sun at noon,
Affords a glorious light;
Then fallen reason's boasted moon
Appears no longer bright.

6 And grace not light alone bestows,
But adds a quick'ning power;
The desert blossoms like the rose,†
And sin prevails no more.

HYMN LXXXVII.

The Sea.‡

1 IF, for a time, the air be calm,
Serene and smooth the sea appears,
And shows no danger to alarm
The unexperienc'd landsman's fears.

2 But if the tempest once arise,
The faithless water swells and raves;
Its billows, foaming to the skies,
Disclose a thousand threat'ning graves.

3 My untried heart thus seem'd to me
(So little of myself I knew)
Smooth as the calm unruffled sea,
But, ah! it prov'd as treach'rous too!

4 The peace of which I had a taste,
When Jesus first his love reveal'd,
I fondly hop'd, would always last,
Because my foes were then conceal'd.

5 But when I felt the tempest's power
Rouse my corruptions from their sleep,
I trembled at the stormy hour,
And saw the horrors of the deep.

6 Now on presumption's billows borne,
My spirit seem'd the Lord to dare;
Now, quick as thought, a sudden turn
Plung'd me in gulfs of black despair.

7 Lord, save me, or I sink, I prayed,
He heard, and bid the tempest cease;
The angry waves his word obeyed,
And all my fears were hush'd to peace.

8 The peace is his, and not my own,
My heart (no better than before)

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* 1 Cor. xiii. 1. † Isa. xxxv. 1. ‡ Book I. Hymn CXV.

Is still to dreadful changes prone,
Then let me never trust it more.

HYMN LXXXVIII.

The Flood.

1 Though small the drops of falling rain,
If one be singly view'd;
Collected they o'erspread the plain,
And form a mighty flood.

2 The house it meets within its course
Should not be built on clay,
Lest, with a wild resistless force,
It sweep the whole away.

3 Though for a while it seemed secure,
It will not bear the shock,
Unless it has foundations sure,
And stands upon a rock.

4 Thus sinners think their evil deeds,
Like drops of rain, are small;
But it the power of thought exceeds,
To count the sum of all.

5 One sin can raise, though small it seems,
A flood to drown the soul;
What then, when countless million streams
Shall join to swell the whole?

6 Yet, while they think the weather fair,
If warn'd, they smile or frown;
But they will tremble and despair,
When the fierce flood comes down.

7 Oh! then, on Jesus ground your hope,
That stone in Zion laid;*
Lest your poor building quickly drop,
With ruin on your head.

HYMN LXXXIX.

The Thaw.

1 The ice and snow we lately saw,
Which cover'd all the ground,
Are melted soon before the thaw,
And can no more be found.

2 Could all the art of man suffice
To move away the snow,
To clear the rivers from the ice,
Or make the waters flow?

3 No, 'tis the work of God alone;
An emblem of the power
By which he melts the heart of stone
In his appointed hour.

4 All outward means, till he appears,
Will ineffectual prove;
Though much the sinner sees and hears
He cannot learn to love.

5 But let the stoutest sinner feel
The soft'ning warmth of grace,
Though hard as ice, or rocks, or steel,
His heart dissolves apace.

6 Seeing the blood which Jesus spilt,
To save his soul from woe,
His hatred, unbelief, and guilt,
All melt away like snow.

7 Jesus, we in thy name entreat,
Reveal thy gracious arm;
And grant thy Spirit's kindly heat,
Our frozen hearts to warm.

HYMN XC.

The Loadstone.

1 As needles point towards the pole,
When touch'd by the magnetic stone;
So faith in Jesus gives the soul
A tendency before unknown.

2 Till then, by blinded passions led,
In search of fancied good we range;
The paths of disappointment tread,
To nothing fix'd, but love of change.

3 But when the Holy Ghost imparts
A knowledge of the Saviour's love,
Our wand'ring, weary, restless hearts,
Are fix'd at once, no more to move.

4 Now a new principle takes place,
Which guides and animates the will;
This love, another name for grace,
Constrains to good, and bars from ill.

5 By love's pure light we soon perceive
Our noblest bliss and proper end;
And gladly ev'ry idol leave,
To love and serve our Lord and Friend.

6 Thus borne along by faith and hope,
We feel the Saviour's words are true;
"And I, if I be lifted up,
Will draw the sinner upward too."*

HYMN XCI.

The Spider and the Bee.

1 On the same flower we often see
The loathsome spider and the bee;
But what they get by working there,
Is different as their natures are.

2 The bee a sweet reward obtains,
And honey well repays his pains;
Home to the hive he bears the store,
And then returns in quest of more.

3 But no sweet flowers that grace the field
Can honey to the spider yield;
A cobweb all that he can spin,
And poison all he stores within.

4 Thus in that sacred field, the word,
With flowers of God's own planting stor'd,
Like bees his children feed and thrive,
And bring home honey to the hive.

5 There, spider-like, the wicked come,
And seem to taste the sweet perfume:
But the vile venom of their hearts
To poison all their food converts.

6 From the same truths believers prize,
They weave vain refuges of lies;
And from the promise license draw,
To trifle with the holy law.

7 Lord, shall thy word of life and love
The means of death to numbers prove!

* Matt. vii. 24; 1 Peter ii. 6.

* John xii. 32.

Unless thy grace our hearts renew,*
We sink to hell, with heaven in view.

HYMN XCII.

The Bee saved from the Spider.

1 THE subtle spider often weaves
His unsuspected snares
Among the balmy flowers and leaves,
To which the bee repairs.

2 When in his web he sees one hang,
With a malicious joy,
He darts upon it with his fang,
To poison and destroy.

3 How welcome then some pitying friend,
To save the threaten'd bee:
The spider's treach'rous web to rend,
And set the captive free!

4 My soul has been in such a case;
When first I knew the Lord,
I hasted to the means of grace,
Where sweets I knew were stor'd.

5 Little I thought of danger near,
That soon my joys would ebb:
But ah! I met a spider there,
Who caught me in his web.

6 Then Satan rais'd his pois'nous sting,
And aim'd his blows at me;
While I, poor helpless trembling thing,
Could neither fight nor flee.

7 But, oh! the Saviour's pitying eye
Relieved me from despair;
He saw me at the point to die,
And broke the fatal snare.

8 My case his heedless saints should warn,
Or cheer them if afraid;
May you from me your danger learn,
And where to look for aid.

HYMN XCIII.

The tamed Lion.

1 A LION, though by nature wild,
The art of man can tame;
He stands before his keeper mild,
And gentle as a lamb.

2 He watches, with submissive eye,
The hand that gives him food,
As if he meant to testify
A sense of gratitude.

3 But man himself, who thus subdues
The fiercest beasts of prey,
And nature more unfeeling shows,
And far more fierce than they.

4 Though by the Lord preserv'd and fed,
He proves rebellious still:
And while he eats his Maker's bread,
Resists his holy will.

5 Alike in vain of grace that saves,
Or threat'ning law he hears;
The savage scorns, blasphemes, and raves,
But neither loves nor fears.

6 O Saviour! how thy wond'rous power
By angels is proclaim'd!
When in their own appointed hour,
They see this lion tam'd.

7 The love thy bleeding cross displays,
The hardest heart subdues;
Here furious lions, while they gaze,
Their rage and fierceness lose.*

8 Yet we are but renew'd in part,
The lion still remains;
Lord, drive him wholly from my heart,
Or keep him fast in chains.

HYMN XCIV.

Sheep.

1 THE Saviour calls his people sheep,
And bids them on his love rely;
For he alone their souls can keep,
And he alone their wants supply.

2 The bull can fight, the hare can flee,
The ant in summer food prepare;
But helpless sheep, and such are we,
Depend upon the Shepherd's care.

3 Jehovah is our Shepherd's name,†
Then what have we, though weak, to fear;
Our sin and folly we proclaim,
If we despond while he is near.

4 When Satan threatens to devour,
When troubles press on every side,
Think of our Shepherd's care and power,
He can defend, he will provide.

5 See the rich pastures of his grace,
Where, in full streams, salvation flows!
There he appoints our resting place,
And we may feed, secure from foes.

6 There, 'midst the flock, the Shepherd dwells,
The sheep around in safety lie;
The wolf in vain with malice swells,
For he protects them with his eye.‡

7 Dear Lord, if I am one of thine,
From anxious thoughts I would be free,
To trust, and love, and praise, is mine,
The care of all belongs to thee.

HYMN XCV.

The Garden.

1 A GARDEN contemplation suits,
And may instruction yield,
Sweeter than all the flowers and fruits
With which the spot is fill'd.

2 Eden was Adam's dwelling-place,
While bless'd with innocence;
But sin o'erwhelm'd him with disgrace,
And drove the rebel thence.

3 Oft as the garden-walk we tread
We should bemoan his fall:

* Book III. Hymn lxxi.

* Isaiah xi. 6. † Psalm xxiii. 1. ‡ Micah v. 4.

The trespass of our legal head
In ruin plung'd us all.

4 The garden of Gethsemane,
The second Adam saw,
Oppress'd with woe, to set us free
From the avenging law.

5 How stupid we, who can forget,
With gardens in our sight,
His agonies and bloody sweat
In that tremendous night.

6 His church as a fair garden stands,
Which walls of love inclose,
Each tree is planted by his hands,*
And by his blessing grows.

7 Believing hearts are gardens too,
For grace has sown its seeds,
Where once, by nature, nothing grew
But thorns and worthless weeds.

8 Such themes, to those who Jesus love,
May constant joys afford,
And make a barren desert prove
The garden of the Lord.

HYMN XCVI.

For a Garden-Seat or Summer-House.

1 A SHELTER from the rain or wind,†
A shade from scorching heat,
A resting-place you here may find
To ease your weary feet.

2 Enter, but with a serious thought
Consider who is near:
This is a consecrated spot,
The Lord is present here.

3 A question of the utmost weight,
While reading, meets your eye;
May conscience witness to your state,
And give a true reply!

4 Is Jesus to your heart reveal'd,
As full of truth and grace?
And is his name your hope and shield,
Your rest and hiding-place?

5 If so, for all events prepar'd
Whatever storms may rise,
He whom you love will safely guard,
And guide you to the skies.

6 No burning sun, or storm, or rain,
Will there your peace annoy;
No sin, temptation, grief or pain,
Intrude to damp your joy.

7 But if his name you have not known,
O seek him while you may!
Lest you should meet his awful frown
In that approaching day.

8 When the avenging Judge you see,
With terrors on his brow,
Where can you hide, or whither flee,
If you reject him now?

* Isa. lxi. 3. † Isa. xxxii. 2.

HYMN XCVII.

The Creatures in the Lord's Hands.

1 THE water stood like walls of brass,
To let the sons of Israel pass,*
And from the rock in rivers burst,
At Moses' prayer,† to quench their thirst.

2 The fire, restrain'd by God's commands,
Could only burn his people's bands:‡
Too faint, when he was with them there,
To singe their garments or their hair.

3 At Daniel's feet the lions lay,§
Like harmless lambs, nor touch'd their prey;
And ravens, which on carron fed,
Procur'd Elijah flesh and bread.‖

4 Thus creatures only can fulfil
Their great Creator's holy will;
And when his servants need their aid
His purposes must be obeyed.

5 So if his blessing he refuse,
Their power to help they quickly lose;
Sure as on creatures we depend,
Our hopes in disappointment end.

6 Then let us trust the Lord alone,
And creature-confidence disown;
Nor, if they threaten, need we fear;
They cannot hurt if he be near.

7 If instruments of pain they prove,
Still they are guided by his love,
As lancets by the surgeon's skill,
Which wound to cure and not to kill.

HYMN XCVIII.

On Dreaming.

1 WHEN slumber seals our weary eyes,
The busy fancy wakeful keeps;
The scenes which then before us rise,
Prove something in us never sleeps.

2 As in another world we seem,
A new creation of our own;
All appears real, though a dream,
And all familiar, though unknown.

3 Sometimes the mind beholds again
The past day's bus'ness in review,
Resumes the pleasure or the pain,
And sometimes all we meet is new.

4 What schemes we form! what pains we take,
We fight, we run, we fly, we fall;
But all is ended when we wake,
We scarcely then a trace recall.

5 But though our dreams are often wild,
Like clouds before the driving storm,
Yet some important may be styl'd,
Sent to admonish or inform.

6 What mighty agents have access,
What friends from heaven or foes from hell,
Our minds to comfort or distress,
When we are sleeping, who can tell?

* Exod. xiv. 22. † Numb. xx. 11. ‡ Dan. iii. 27
§ Dan. vi. 23. ‖ 1 Kings xvii. 6.

7 One thing at least, and 'tis enough,
We learn from this surprising fact,
Our dreams afford sufficient proof,
The soul without the flesh can act.

8 This life, which mortals so esteem,
That many choose it for their all,
They will confess, was but a dream,*
When wakened by death's awful call.

HYMN XCIX.

The World.

1 SEE, the world for youth prepares,
Harlot-like, her gaudy snares!
Pleasures round her seem to wait,
But 'tis all a painted cheat.

2 Rash and unsuspecting youth
Thinks to find thee always smooth,
Always kind, till better taught,
By experience dearly bought.

3 So the calm, but faithless sea,
(Lively emblem, world, of thee,)
Tempts the shepherd from the shore,
Foreign regions to explore.

4 While no wrinkled wave is seen,
While the sky remains serene,
Fill'd with hopes and golden schemes,
Of a storm he little dreams.

5 But ere long the tempest raves,
Then he trembles at the waves;
Wishes then he had been wise,
But too late he sinks and dies.

6 Hapless thus are they, vain world,
Soon on rocks of ruin hurl'd,
Who admiring thee, untried,
Court thy pleasure, wealth, or pride.

7 Such a shipwreck had been mine,
Had not Jesus (name divine!)
Sav'd me with a mighty hand,
And restor'd my soul to land.

8 Now, with gratitude I raise
Ebenezers to his praise;
Now my rash pursuits are o'er,
I can trust thee, world, no more.

HYMN C.

The Enchantment dissolved.

1 BLINDED in youth by Satan's arts,
The world to our unpractis'd hearts,
A flatt'ring prospect shows;
Our fancy forms a thousand schemes
Our gay delights and golden dreams,
And undisturb'd repose.

2 So in the desert's dreary waste,
By magic power produc'd in haste,
(As ancient fables say)
Castles, and groves, and music sweet,
The senses of the trav'ller meet,
And stop him in his way.

3 But while he listens with surprise,
The charm dissolves, the vision dies,
'Twas but enchanted ground:
Thus, if the Lord our spirit touch,
The world, which promis'd us so much,
A wilderness is found.

4 At first we start, and feel distress'd,
Convinc'd we never can have rest
In such a wretched place;
But he whose mercy breaks the charm,
Reveals his own almighty arm,
And bids us seek his face.

5 Then we begin to live indeed,
When from our sin and bondage freed
By this beloved Friend;
We follow him from day to day,
Assur'd of grace through all the way,
And glory at the end.

* Isaiah xxix. 3.

BOOK III.

ON THE RISE, PROGRESS, CHANGES, AND COMFORTS OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

I. SOLEMN ADDRESSES TO SINNERS

HYMN I.

Expostulation.

1 No words can declare,
No fancy can paint,
What rage and despair,
What hopeless complaint,
Fill Satan's dark dwelling,
The prison beneath
What weeping, and yelling,
And gnashing of teeth!

2 Yet sinners will choose
This dreadful abode;
Each madly pursues
The dangerous road;
Though God give them warning
They onward will go,
They answer with scorning,
And rush upon woe.

3 How sad to behold
The rich and the poor,
The young and the old,
All blindly secure!
All posting to ruin,
Refusing to stop!
Ah! think what you 're doing
While yet there is hope.

4 How weak is your hand,
To fight with the Lord!
How can you withstand
The edge of his sword?
What hope of escaping
For those who oppose,
When hell is wide gaping
To swallow his foes!

5 How oft have you dar'd
The Lord to his face!
Yet still you are spar'd
To hear of his grace;
Oh! pray for repentance
And life-giving faith,
Before the just sentence
Consign you to death.

6 It is not too late
To Jesus to flee,
His mercy is great,
His pardon is free;
His blood has such virtue
For all that believe,
That nothing can hurt you,
If him you receive.

HYMN II.

Alarm.

1 Stop, poor sinner! stop, and think,
Before you farther go!
Will you sport upon the brink
Of everlasting woe?
Once again, I charge you, stop!
For, unless you warning take,
Ere you are aware, you drop
Into the burning lake!

2 Say, have you an arm like God,
That you his will oppose!
Fear you not that iron rod
With which he breaks his foes?
Can you stand in that dread day,
When he judgment shall proclaim,
And the earth shall melt away,
Like wax before the flame!

3 Pale-fac'd death will quickly come,
To drag you to his bar;
Then to hear your awful doom
Will fill you with despair:
All your sins will round you crowd,
Sins of a blood-crimson dye;
Each for vengeance crying loud,
And what can you reply?

4 Though your heart be made of steel,
Your forehead lin'd with brass,
God at length will make you feel,
He will not let you pass:
Sinners then in vain will call,
(Though they now despise his grace)
Rocks and mountains on us fall,*
And hide us from his face.

5 But as yet there is a hope
You may his mercy know,
Though his arm is lifted up,
He still forbears the blow:
'Twas for sinners Jesus died,
Sinners he invites to come;
None who come shall be denied,
He says, "There still is room."†

* Rev. vi. 16. † Luke xiv. 22.

HYMN III.

We were once as you are.

1 Shall men pretend to pleasure,
Who never knew the Lord,
Can all the worldling's treasure
True peace of mind afford?
They shall obtain this jewel
In what their hearts desire,
When they by adding fuel
Can quench the flame of fire.

2 Till you can bid the ocean,
When furious tempests roar,*
Forget its wonted motion,
And rage and swell no more;
In vain your expectation
To find content in sin,
Or freedom from vexation,
While passions reign within.

3 Come turn your thoughts to Jesus,
If you would good possess;
'Tis he alone that frees us
From guilt and from distress:
When he by faith is present.
The sinner's troubles cease;
His ways are truly pleasant,
And all his paths are peace.†

4 Our time in sin we wasted,
And fed upon the wind;
Until his love we tasted,
No comfort could we find:
But now we stand to witness
His power and grace to you;
May you perceive its fitness,
And call upon him too!

5 Our pleasure and our duty,
Though opposite before,
Since we have seen his beauty,
Are join'd to part no more:
It is our highest pleasure,
No less than duty's call,
To love him beyond measure,
And serve him with our all.

HYMN IV.

Prepare to meet God.

1 Sinner, art thou still secure?
Wilt thou still refuse to pray?
Can thy heart or hands endure
In the Lord's avenging day?
See, his mighty arm is bar'd!
Awful terrors clothe his brow!
For his judgment stand prepar'd,
Thou must either break or bow.

2 At his presence nature shakes,
Earth affrighted hastes to flee,
Solid mountains melt like wax;
What will then become of thee
Who his advent may abide?
You that glory in your shame,
Will you find a place to hide
When the world is wrapt in flame?

* Isa. lvii. 20, 21. † Prov. iii. 17.

3 Then the rich, the great, the wise,
Trembling, guilty, self-condemn'd,
Must behold the wrathful eyes
Of the Judge they once blasphem'd:
Where are now their haughty looks?
Oh their horror and despair!
When they see the open'd books,
And their dreadful sentence hear!

4 Lord, prepare us by thy grace!
Soon we must resign our breath;
And our souls be call'd to pass
Through the iron gate of death:
Let us now our day improve,
Listen to the gospel-voice;
Seek the things that are above,
Scorn the world's pretended joys.

5 Oh! when flesh and heart shall fail,
Let thy love our spirits cheer;
Strengthen'd thus, we shall prevail
Over Satan, sin, and fear:
Trusting in thy precious name,
May we thus our journey end;
Then our foes shall lose their aim,
And the Judge will be our friend.

HYMN V.

Invitation.

1 SINNERS, hear the Saviour's call,
He now is passing by;
He has seen thy grievous thrall,
And heard thy mournful cry,
He has pardons to impart,
Grace to save thee from thy fears;
See the love that fills his heart,
And wipe away thy tears.

2 Why art thou afraid to come,
And tell him all thy case?
He will not pronounce thy doom,
Nor frown thee from his face:
Wilt thou fear Emmanuel?
Wilt thou dread the Lamb of God,
Who, to save thy soul from hell,
Has shed his precious blood?

3 Think how on the cross he hung,
Pierc'd with a thousand wounds!
Hark, from each, as with a tongue,
The voice of pardon sounds!
See, from all his bursting veins,
Blood of wondrous virtue flow!
Shed to wash away thy stains,
And ransom thee from woe.

4 Though his majesty be great,
His mercy is no less;
Though he thy transgressions hate,
He feels for thy distress:
By himself the Lord hath sworn,
He delights not in thy death,*
But invites thee to return,
That thou may'st live by faith.

5 Raise thy downcast eyes, and see
What throngs his throne surround!
These, though sinners once like thee,
Have full salvation found:
Yield not then to unbelief!
While he says, "There yet is room,"
Though of sinners thou art chief,
Since Jesus calls thee, come.

* Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

SIMILAR HYMNS.

Book I. Hymn 75, 91.
Book II. Hymn 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 35, 77, 78, 83.

II. SEEKING, PLEADING, AND HOPING.

HYMN VI.

The burdened Sinner.

1 AH! what can I do,
Or where be secure!
If justice pursue,
What heart can endure?
The heart breaks asunder,
Though hard as a stone,
When God speaks in thunder,
And makes himself known.

2 With terror I read
My sins' heavy score,
The numbers exceed
The sands on the shore;
Guilt makes me unable
To stand or to flee;
So Cain murder'd Abel
And trembled like me.

3 Each sin, like his blood,
With a terrible cry,
Calls loudly on God
To strike from on high:
Nor can my repentance,
Extorted by fear,
Reverse the just sentence,
'Tis just, though severe.

4 The case is too plain,
I have my own choice;
Again, and again,
I slighted his voice,
His warnings neglected,
His patience abus'd,
His gospel rejected,
His mercy refus'd.

5 And must I then go,
For ever to dwell
In torments and woe,
With devils in hell?
Oh! where is the Saviour
I scorn'd in times past?
His word in my favour
Would save me at last.

6 Lord Jesus on thee
I venture to call,
Oh look upon me,
The vilest of all!

For whom didst thou languish,
And bleed on the tree?
O pity my anguish,
And say, "'Twas for thee."

7 A case such as mine
Will honour thy power;
All hell will repine,
All heaven will adore;
If in condemnation
Strict justice takes place,
It shines in salvation,
More glorious through grace.

HYMN VII.

Behold, I am Vile!

1 O LORD, how vile am I,
Unholy and unclean!
How can I dare to venture nigh
With such a load of sin?

2 Is this polluted heart
A dwelling fit for thee?
Swarming, alas! in ev'ry part,
What evils do I see!

3 If I attempt to pray,
And lisp thy holy name,
My thoughts are hurried soon away,
I know not where I am.

4 If in thy word I look,
Such darkness fills my mind,
I only read a sealed book,
But no relief can find.

5 Thy gospel oft I hear,
But hear it still in vain;
Without desire, or love, or fear,
I like a stone remain.

6 Myself can hardly bear
This wretched heart of mine;
How hateful, then, must it appear
To those pure eyes of thine?

7 And must I then indeed
Sink in despair and die?
Fain would I hope that thou didst bleed
For such a wretch as I.

8 That blood which thou hast spilt,
That grace which is thine own,
Can cleanse the vilest sinner's guilt,
And soften hearts of stone.

9 Low at thy feet I bow,
O pity and forgive!
Here will I lie, and wait till thou
Shalt bid me rise and live.

HYMN VIII.

The shining Light.

1 My former hopes are fled,
My terror now begins;
I feel, alas! that I am dead
In trespasses and sins.

2 Ah! whither shall I fly?
I hear the thunder roar;
The law proclaims destruction nigh,
And vengeance at the door.

3 When I review my ways,
I dread impending doom;
But sure a friendly whisper says,
"Flee from the wrath to come."

4 I see, or think I see,
A glimm'ring from afar;
A beam of day that shines for me,
To save me from despair.

5 Forerunner of the sun,*
It marks the pilgrim's way;
I 'll gaze upon it while I run,
And watch the rising day. C.

HYMN IX.

Encouragement.

1 My soul is beset
With grief and dismay,
I owe a vast debt,
And nothing can pay:
I must go to prison,
Unless that dear Lord,
Who died and is risen,
His pity afford.

2 The death that he died,
The blood that he spilt,
To sinners applied,
Discharge from all guilt:
This great intercessor
Can give, if he please,
The vilest transgressor
Immediate release.

3 When nail'd to the tree,
He answer'd the prayer
Of one who, like me,
Was nigh to despair;†
He did not upbraid him
With all he had done,
But instantly made him
A saint and a son.

4 The jailor, I read,
A pardon receiv'd:‡
And how was he freed?
He only believ'd:
His case mine resembled,
Like me he was foul,
Like me too he trembled,
But faith made him whole.

5 Though Saul in his youth,
To madness enrag'd,
Against the Lord's truth
And people engag'd;
Yet Jesus, the Saviour,
Whom long he revil'd,§
Receiv'd him to favour,
And made him a child.

6 A foe to all good,
In wickedness skill'd,

* Psalm cxxx. 6.
† Luke xxiii. 43.
‡ Acts xvi. 13.
§ 1 Tim. i. 16.

Manasseh with blood
Jerusalem fill'd;*
In evil long harden'd
The Lord he defied;
Yet he too was pardon'd
When mercy he cried.

7 Of sinners the chief,
And viler than all,
The jailor or thief,
Manasseh or Saul;
Since they were forgiven,
Why should I despair,
While Christ is in heaven,
And still answers prayer.

HYMN X.

The Waiting Soul.

1 BREATHE from the gentle south, O Lord,
And cheer me from the north;
Blow on the treasures of thy word,
And call the spices forth!

2 I wish, thou know'st, to be resign'd,
And wait with patient hope;
But hope delayed fatigues the mind,
And drinks the spirits up.

3 Help me to reach the distant goal,
Confirm my feeble knee,
Pity the sickness of a soul
That faints for love of thee.

4 Cold as I feel this heart of mine,
Yet since I feel it so
It yields some hope of life divine,
Within, however low.

5 I seem forsaken and alone,
I hear the lion roar,
And ev'ry door is shut but one,
And that is mercy's door.

6 There, till the dear Deliv'rer come,
I 'll wait with humble prayer;
And when he calls his exile home,
The Lord shall find him there.

HYMN XI.

The Effort.

1 CHEER up, my soul, there is a mercy-seat
Sprinkled with blood, where Jesus answers prayer;
There humbly cast thyself beneath his feet,
For never needy sinner perish'd there.

2 Lord, I am come! thy promise is my plea,
Without thy word I durst not venture nigh;
But thou hast call'd the burden'd soul to thee,
A weary, burden'd soul, O Lord, am I!

3 Bow'd down beneath a heavy load of sin,
By Satan's fierce temptations sorely prest,
Beset without, and full of fears within,
Trembling and faint, I come to thee for rest.

4 Be thou my refuge, Lord, my hiding-place,
I know no force can tear me from thy side;
Unmov'd I then may all accusers face,
And answer ev'ry charge with "Jesus died."

5 Yes, thou didst weep, and bleed, and groan, and die,
Well hast thou known what fierce temptations mean;
Such was thy love; and now, enthron'd on high,
The same compassions in thy bosom reign.

6 Lord, give me faith:—he hears: what grace is this!
Dry up thy tears, my soul, and cease to grieve;
He shows me what he did, and who he is,
I must, I will, I can, I do believe.

HYMN XII.

ANOTHER.

1 APPROACH, my soul, the mercy-seat
Where Jesus answers prayer,
There humbly fall before his feet,
For none can perish there.

2 Thy promise is my only plea,
With this I venture nigh;
Thou callest burden'd souls to thee,
And, such, O Lord, am I.

3 Bow'd down beneath a load of sin,
By Satan sorely press'd,
By wars without, and fears within,
I come to thee for rest.

4 Be thou my shield and hiding-place?
That, shelter'd near thy side,
I may my fierce accuser face,
And tell him, "Thou hast died."

5 O wond'rous love! to bleed and die,
To bear the cross and shame,
That guilty sinners, such as I,
Might plead thy gracious name.

6 "Poor tempest-tossed soul, be still,
My promis'd grace receive:"
'Tis Jesus speaks—I must, I will,
I can, I do believe.

HYMN XIII.

Seeking the Beloved.

1 To those who know the Lord, I speak,
Is my beloved near?
The bridegroom of my soul I seek,
O when will he appear!

2 Though once a man of grief and shame,
Yet now he fills a throne,
And bears the greatest, sweetest name,
That earth or heaven have known.

3 Grace flies before, and love attends
His steps where'er he goes;
Though none can see him but his friends,
And they were once his foes.

* 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12, 13.

4 He speaks—obedient to his call
Our warm affections move;
Did he but shine alike on all,
Then all alike would love.

5 Then love in every heart would reign,
And war would cease to roar;
And cruel and blood-thirsty men
Would thirst for blood no more.

6 Such Jesus is, and such his grace,
O may he shine on you!*
And tell him, when you see his face,
I long to see him too. C.

HYMN XIV.

Rest for Weary Souls.

1 Does the gospel-word proclaim
Rest for those who weary be!†
Then, my soul, put in thy claim,
Sure that promise speaks to thee;
Marks of grace I cannot show,
All polluted is my best;
Yet I weary am, I know,
And the weary long for rest.

2 Burden'd with a load of sin,
Harass'd with tormenting doubt,
Hourly conflicts from within,
Hourly crosses from without:
All my little strength is gone,
Sink I must without supply;
Sure upon the earth is none
Can more weary be than I.

3 In the ark the weary dove‡
Found a welcome resting-place;
Thus my spirit longs to prove
Rest in Christ, the ark of grace.
Tempest-toss'd I long have been,
And the flood increases fast;
Open, Lord, and take me in,
Till the storm be overpast.

4 Safely lodg'd within thy breast,
What a wondrous change I find!
Now I know thy promised rest
Can compose a troubled mind:
You that weary are, like me,
Hearken to the gospel call;
To the ark for refuge flee,
Jesus will receive you all!

SIMILAR HYMNS.

Book I. Hymn 45, 69, 82, 83, 84, 96.
Book II. Hymn 29.

III. CONFLICT.

HYMN XV.

Light shining out of Darkness.

1 God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

2 Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up his bright designs,
And works his sovereign will.

3 Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread,
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

4 Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace;
Behind a frowning providence,
He hides a smiling face.

5 His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

6 Blind unbelief is sure to err,*
And scan his work in vain;
God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain.

HYMN XVI.

Welcome Cross.

1 'Tis my happiness below,
Not to live without the cross,
But the Saviour's power to know,
Sanctifying every loss:
Trials must and will befall;
But with humble faith to see
Love inscribed upon them all,
This is happiness to me.

2 God, in Israel, sows the seeds
Of affliction, pain, and toil;
These spring up and choke the weeds
Which would else o'erspread the soil:
Trials make the promise sweet,
Trials give new life to prayer;
Trials bring me to his feet,
Lay me low, and keep me there.

3 Did I meet no trials here,
No chastisement by the way;
Might I not with reason fear,
I should prove a cast-away,
Bastards may escape the rod,†
Sunk in earthly, vain delight;
But the true-born child of God
Must not, would not, if he might. C.

HYMN XVII.

Afflictions sanctified by the Word.

1 O how I love thy holy word,
Thy gracious covenant, O Lord!
It guides me in the peaceful way,
I think upon it all the day.

2 What are the mines of shining wealth,
The strength of youth, the bloom of health!
What are all joys compar'd with those
Thine everlasting word bestows.

3 Long unafflicted, undismayed,
In pleasure's path secure I strayed;

* Cant. v. 8. † Matt. xi. 28. ‡ Gen. viii. 9.

* John xiii. 7. † Heb. xii. 8.

Thou mad'st me feel thy chast'ning rod,*
And straight I turn'd unto my God.

4 What though it pierc'd my fainting heart,
I bless thine hand that caus'd the smart;
It taught my tears a while to flow,
But sav'd me from eternal woe.

5 Oh! had'st thou left me unchastis'd,
Thy precepts I had still despis'd;
And still the snare in secret laid,
Had my unwary feet betrayed.

6 I love thee, therefore, O my God!
And breathe towards thy dear abode,
Where in thy presence fully blest,
Thy chosen saints for ever rest. C.

HYMN XVIII.

Temptation.

1 THE billows swell, the winds are high,
Clouds overcast my wintry sky;
Out of the depths to thee I call,
My fears are great, my strength is small.

2 O Lord! the pilot's part perform,
And guide and guard me thro' the storm;
Defend me from each threat'ning ill,
Control the waves, say, "Peace be still."

3 Amidst the roaring of the sea,
My soul still hangs her hope on thee;
Thy constant love, thy faithful care
Is all that saves me from despair.

4 Dangers of every shape and name
Attend the followers of the Lamb,
Who leave the world's deceitful shore,
And leave it to return no more.

5 Though tempest-toss'd, and half a wreck,
My Saviour through the floods I seek;
Let neither winds nor stormy main
Force back my shatter'd bark again. C.

HYMN XIX.

Looking upwards in a Storm.

1 GOD of my life, to thee I call,
Afflicted at thy feet I fall;†
When the great water-floods prevail,
Leave not my trembling heart to fail!

2 Friend of the friendless and the faint!
Where should I lodge my deep complaint?
Where but with thee, whose open door
Invites the helpless and the poor.

3 Did ever mourner plead with thee,
And thou refuse that mourner's plea?
Does not the word still fix'd remain,
That none shall seek thy face in vain?

4 That were a grief I could not bear,
Didst thou not hear and answer prayer;
But a prayer-hearing, answ'ring God,
Supports me under every load.

5 Fair is the lot that 's cast for me;
I have an advocate with thee;
They whom the world caresses most,
Have no such privilege to boast.

6 Poor, though I am, despis'd, forgot,*
Yet God, my God, forgets me not;
And he is safe, and must succeed,
For whom the Lord vouchsafes to plead.
C.

HYMN XX.

The Valley of the Shadow of Death.

1 MY soul is sad and much dismayed;
See, Lord, what legions of my foes,
With fierce Apollyon at their head,
My heavenly pilgrimage oppose!

2 See, from the ever-burning lake,
How like a smoky cloud they rise!
With horrid blasts my soul they shake,
With storms of blasphemies and lies.

3 Their fiery arrows reach the mark,†
My throbbing heart with anguish tear;
Each lights upon a kindred spark,
And finds abundant fuel there.

4 I hate the thought that wrongs the Lord;
Oh! I would drive it from my breast,
With my own sharp two-edged sword,
Far as the east is from the west.

5 Come, then, and chase the cruel host,
Heal the deep wounds I have receiv'd!
Nor let the powers of darkness boast,
That I am foil'd, and thou art griev'd.
C.

HYMN XXI.

The Storm hushed.

1 'TIS past—the dreadful stormy night
Is gone, with all its fears!
And now I see returning light,
The Lord, my Sun, appears.

2 The tempter, who but lately said,
I soon should be his prey,
Has heard my Saviour's voice, and fled
With shame and grief away.

3 Ah! Lord, since thou didst hide thy face,
What has my soul endur'd?
But now 'tis past,—I feel thy grace,
And all my wounds are cur'd!

4 O wondrous change! but just before,
Despair beset me round,
I heard the lion's horrid roar,
And trembled at the sound.

5 Before corruption, guilt and fear,
My comforts blasted fell;
And unbelief discover'd near
The dreadful depths of hell.

6 But Jesus pitied my distress,
He heard my feeble cry,
Reveal'd his blood and righteousness
And brought salvation nigh.

* Psal. cxix. 71. † Psal. lxix. 15.

* Psal. xl. 17. † Eph. vi. 16.

7 Beneath the banner of his love
I now secure remain;
The tempter frets, but dares not move,
To break my peace again.

8 Lord, since thou thus hast broke my bands,
And set the captive free,
I would devote my tongue, my hands,
My heart, my all, to thee.

HYMN XXII.

Help in Time of Need.

1 Unless the Lord had been my stay,
With trembling joy my soul may say,
My cruel foe had gain'd his end:
But he appear'd for my relief,
And Satan sees with shame and grief,
That I have an almighty Friend.

2 Oh! 'twas a dark and trying hour,
When, harass'd by the tempter's power,
I felt my strongest hopes decline!
You only who have known his arts,
You only who have felt his darts,
Can pity such a case as mine.

3 Loud in my ears a charge he read,
(My conscience witness'd all he said,)
My long black list of outward sin;
Then bringing forth my heart to view,
Too well what's hidden there he knew,
He show'd me ten times worse within.

4 'Twas all too true, my soul replied,
But I remember Jesus died,
And now he fills a throne of grace:
I'll go as I have done before,
His mercy I may still implore,
I have his promise, "Seek my face."

5 But, as when sudden fogs arise,
The trees, and hills, the sun and skies,
Are all at once conceal'd from view:
So clouds of horror, black as night,
By Satan rais'd, hid from my sight
The throne of grace and promise too.

6 Then, while beset with guilt and fear,
He tried to urge me to despair,
He tried, and he almost prevail'd;
But Jesus, by a heavenly ray,
Drove clouds, and guilt, and fear away,
And all the tempter's malice fail'd.

HYMN XXIII.

Peace after a Storm.

1 When darkness long has veil'd my mind,
And smiling day once more appears,
Then, my Redeemer, then I find
The folly of my doubts and fears.

2 Straight I upbraid my wand'ring heart,
And blush that I should ever be
Thus prone to act so base a part,
Or harbour one hard thought of thee!

3 Oh! let me then at length be taught,
What I am still so slow to learn,
That God is love, and changes not,
Nor knows the shadow of a turn.

4 Sweet truth, and easy to repeat!
But when my faith is sharply tried,
I find myself a learner yet,
Unskilful, weak, and apt to slide.

5 But, O my Lord, one look from thee
Subdues the disobedient will,
Drives doubt and discontent away,
And thy rebellious worm is still.

6 Thou art as ready to forgive,
As I am ready to repine;
Thou, therefore, all the praise receive,
Be shame and self-abhorrence mine. C.

HYMN XXIV.

Mourning and Longing.

1 The Saviour hides his face!
My spirit thirsts to prove
Renew'd supplies of pard'ning grace,
And never-fading love.

2 The favour'd souls who know
What glories shine in him,
Pant for his presence, as the roe
Pants for the living stream.

3 What trifles tease me now!
They swarm like summer-flies,
They cleave to every thing I do,
And swim before my eyes.

4 How dull the Sabbath-day,
Without the Sabbath's Lord!
How toilsome then to sing and pray,
And wait upon the word!

5 Of all the truths I hear,
How few delight my taste!
I glean a berry here and there,
But mourn the vintage past.

6 Yet let me (as I ought)
Still hope to be supplied;
No pleasure else is worth a thought,
Nor shall I be denied.

7 Though I am but a worm,
Unworthy of his care,
The Lord will my desire perform,
And grant me all my prayer. C.

HYMN XXV.

Rejoice the Soul of thy Servant.

1 When my prayers are a burden and task,
No wonder I little receive;
O Lord! make me willing to ask,
Since thou art so ready to give:
Although I am bought with thy blood,
And all thy salvation is mine,
At a distance from thee my chief good,
I wander, and languish, and pine.

2 Of thy goodness of old when I read,
To those who were sinners like me,
Why may I not wrestle and plead,
With them a partaker to be?
Thine arm is not short'ned since then,
And those who believe in thy name,
Ever find thou art Yea and Amen,
Through all generations the same.

3 While my spirit within me is press'd
With sorrow, temptation, and fear,
Like John, I would flee to thy breast,*
And pour my complaints in thine ear:
How happy and favour'd was he,
Who could on thy bosom repose!
Might this favour be granted to me,
I 'd smile at the rage of my foes.

4 I have heard of thy wonderful name,
How great and exalted thou art;
But ah! I confess to my shame,
It faintly impresses my heart:
The beams of thy glory display,
As Peter once saw thee appear;
That, transported like him, I may say,
"It is good for my soul to be here."†

5 What a sorrow and weight didst thou feel,
When nail'd, for my sake, to the tree!
My heart sure is harder than steel,
To feel no more sorrow for thee;
Oh! let me with Thomas descry
The wounds in thy hands and thy side,
And have feelings like his, when I cry,
"My God and my Saviour has died!"‡

6 But if thou hast appointed me still
To wrestle, and suffer, and fight;
O make me resign to thy will,
For all thine appointments are right:
This mercy, at least, I entreat,
That, knowing how vile I have been,
I, with Mary, may wait at thy feet,§
And weep o'er the pardon of sin.

HYMN XXVI.

Self-acquaintance.

1 DEAR Lord! accept a sinful heart,
Which of itself complains,
And mourns, with much and frequent smart,
The evil it contains.

2 There fiery seeds of anger lurk,
Which often hurt my frame;
And wait but for the tempter's work,
To fan them to a flame.

3 Legality holds out a bribe
To purchase life from thee;
And discontent would fain prescribe
How thou shalt deal with me.

4 While unbelief withstands thy grace,
And puts the mercy by,
Presumption, with a brow of brass,
Says, "Give me, or I die."

5 How eager are my thoughts to roam
In quest of what they love;
But, ah! when duty calls them home,
How heavily they move!

6 O cleanse me in a Saviour's blood!
Transform me by thy power;
And make me thy belov'd abode,
And let me rove no more. C.

* John xiii. 25. † Matth. xvii. 16.
‡ John xx. 28. § Luke vii. 38.

HYMN XXVII.

Bitter and Sweet.

1 KINDLE, Saviour, in my heart
A flame of love divine:
Hear, for mine I trust thou art,
And sure I would be thine:
If my soul has felt thy grace,
If to me thy name is known,
Why should trifles fill the place
Due to thyself alone?

2 'Tis a strange mysterious life
I live from day to day;
Light and darkness, peace and strife,
Bear an alternate sway:
When I think the battle won,
I have to fight it o'er again;
When I say I 'm overthrown,
Relief I soon obtain.

3 Often at the mercy-seat,
While calling on thy name,
Swarms of evil thoughts I meet,
Which fill my soul with shame:
Agitated in my mind,
Like a feather in the air,
Can I thus a blessing find?
My soul, can this be prayer?

4 But when Christ, my Lord and Friend,
Is pleas'd to show his power;
All at once my troubles end,
And I 've a golden hour:
Then I see his smiling face,
Feel the pledge of joys to come;
Often, Lord, repeat this grace,
Till thou shalt call me home.

HYMN XXVIII.

Prayer for Patience.

1 LORD, who hast suffer'd all for me,
My peace and pardon to procure,
The lighter cross I bear for thee
Help me with patience to endure.

2 The storm of loud repining hush;
I would in humble silence mourn; [bush,
Why should the unburnt, though burning
Be angry, as the crackling thorn?

3 Man should not faint at thy rebuke,
Like Joshua falling on his face,*
When the curs'd thing that Achan took
Brought Israel into just disgrace.

4 Perhaps some golden wedge suppress'd,
Some secret sin offends my God;
Perhaps that Babylonish vest,
Self-righteousness, provokes the rod.

5 Ah! were I buffeted all day,
Mock'd, crown'd with thorns, and spit upon,
I yet should have no right to say,
My great distress is mine alone.

6 Let me not angrily declare,
No pain was ever sharp like mine,

* Joshua vii. 10, 11.

Nor murmur at the cross I bear,
But rather weep, rememb'ring thine. C.

HYMN XXIX.

Submission.

1 O Lord, my best desire fulfil,
And help me to resign
Life, health, and comfort to thy will,
And make thy pleasure mine.

2 Why should I shrink at thy command,
Whose love forbids my fears,
Or tremble at the gracious hand
That wipes away my tears?

3 No, let me rather freely yield
What most I prize to thee;
Who never hast a good withheld,
Or wilt withhold from me.

4 Thy favour all my journey through
Thou art engag'd to grant;
What else I want, or think I do,
'Tis better still to want.

5 Wisdom and mercy guide my way,
Shall I resist them both?
A poor blind creature of a day,
And crush'd before the moth!

6 But, ah! my inward spirit cries,
Still bind me to thy sway;
Else the next cloud that vails my skies
Drives all these thoughts away. C.

HYMN XXX.

Why should I complain?

1 When my Saviour, my Shepherd is near,
How quickly my sorrows depart!
New beauties around me appear,
New spirits enliven my heart:
His presence gives peace to my soul,
And Satan assaults me in vain;
While my Shepherd his power controls,
I think I no more shall complain.

2 But, alas! what a change do I find, [sight!
When my Shepherd withdraws from my
My fears all return to my mind,
My day is soon chang'd into night:
Then Satan his efforts renews
To vex and ensnare me again;
All my pleasing enjoyments I lose,
And can only lament and complain.

3 By these changes I often pass through,
I am taught my own weakness to know;
I am taught what my Shepherd can do,
And how much to his mercy I owe:
It is he that supports me through all;
When I faint, he revives me again;
He attends to my prayer when I call,
And bids me no longer complain.

4 Wherefore then should I murmur and grieve,
Since my Shepherd is always the same,
And has promis'd he never will leave*
The soul that confides in his name?
To relieve me from all that I fear,
He was buffeted, tempted, and slain;
And at length he will surely appear,
Though he leaves me a while to complain.

5 While I dwell in an enemy's land,
Can I hope to be always in peace!
'Tis enough that my Shepherd's at hand,
And that shortly this warfare will cease;
For ere long he will bid me remove†
From this region of sorrow and pain,
To abide in his presence above,
And then I no more shall complain.

HYMN XXXI.

Return, O Lord, how long!

1 Return to bless my waiting eyes,
And cheer my mourning heart, O Lord!
Without thee, all beneath the skies
No real pleasure can afford.

2 When thy lov'd presence meets my sight,
It softens care and sweetens toil;
The sun shines forth with double light,
The whole creation wears a smile.

3 Upon thine arm of love I rest,
Thy gracious voice forbids my fear;
No storms disturb my peaceful breast,
No foes assault when thou art near.

4 But ah! since thou hast been away,
Nothing but trouble have I known;
And Satan marks me for his prey
Because he sees me left alone.

5 My sun is hid, my comforts lost,
My graces droop, my sins revive;
Distress'd, dismayed, and tempest-toss'd,
My soul is only just alive.

6 Lord, hear my cry, and come again!
Put all mine enemies to shame,
And let them see 'tis not in vain
That I have trusted in thy name.

HYMN XXXII.

Cast down, but not Destroyed.

1 Though sore beset with guilt and fear,
I cannot, dare not quite despair;
If I must perish, would the Lord
Have taught my heart to love his word?
Would he have given me eyes to see‡
My danger and my remedy,
Reveal'd his name, and bid me pray,
Had he resolv'd to say me nay!

2 No—though cast down, I am not slain;
I fall, but I shall rise again;§
The present, Satan, is thy hour,
But Jesus shall control thy power;
His love will plead for my relief,
He hears my groans, he feels my grief;

* Jer. i. 19. † Rev. ii. 10.
‡ Judges xiii. 23. § Micah vii. 8.

Nor will he suffer thee to boast
A soul that thought his help was lost.

3 'Tis true, I have unfaithful been,
And griev'd his Spirit by my sin;
Yet still his mercy he 'll reveal,
And all my wounds and follies heal:
Abounding sin I must confess,*
But more abounding is his grace;
He once vouchsaf'd for me to bleed,
And now he lives my cause to plead.

4 I 'll cast myself before his feet,
I see him on his mercy-seat,
('Tis sprinkled with atoning blood)
There sinners find access to God:
Ye burden'd souls, approach with me,
And make the Saviour's name your plea;
Jesus will pardon all who come,
And strike your fierce accuser dumb.

HYMN XXXIII.

The Benighted Traveller.

1 FOREST beasts, that live by prey,
Seldom show themselves by day;
But when day-light is withdrawn,†
Then they rove and roar till dawn.

2 Who can tell the trav'ller's fears,
When their horrid yells he hears?
Terror almost stops his breath,
While each step he looks for death.

3 Thus, when Jesus is in view,
Cheerful I my way pursue;
Walking by my Saviour's light,
Nothing can my soul affright.

4 But when he forbears to shine,
Soon the trav'ller's case is mine;
Lost, benighted, struck with dread,
What a painful path I tread!

5 Then my soul with terror hears,
Worse than lions, wolves, or bears,
Roaring loud in ev'ry part,
Through the forest of my heart.

6 Wrath, impatience, envy, pride,
Satan and his host beside,
Press around me to devour;
How can I escape their power?

7 Gracious Lord, afford me light,
Put these beasts of prey to flight;
Let thy power and love be shown;‡
Save me, for I am thine own.

HYMN XXXIV.

The Prisoner.

1 WHEN the poor pris'ner through a gate
Sees others walk at large,
How does he mourn his lonely state,
And long for a discharge!

2 Thus I, confin'd in unbelief,
My loss of freedom mourn,
And spend my hours in fruitless grief,
Until my Lord return.

3 The beam of day, which pierces through
The gloom in which I dwell,
Only discloses to my view
The horrors of my cell.

4 Ah! how my pensive spirit faints,
To think of former days!
When I could triumph with the saints,
And join their songs of praise!

5 But now my joys are all cut off,
In prison I am cast,
And Satan, with a cruel scoff,*
Says, "Where 's your God at last?"

6 Dear Saviour, for thy mercy's sake,
My strong, my only plea,
These gates and bars in pieces break,†
And set the pris'ner free!

7 Surely my soul shall sing to thee,
For liberty restor'd;
And all thy saints admire to see
The mercies of the Lord.

HYMN XXXV.

Perplexity relieved.

1 UNCERTAIN how the way to find
Which to salvation led,
I listen'd long, with anxious mind,
To hear what others said.

2 When some of joys and comforts told,
I fear'd that I was wrong;
For I was stupid, dead, and cold,
Had neither joy nor song.

3 The Lord my lab'ring heart reliev'd,
And made my burden light;
Then for a moment I believ'd,
Supposing all was right.

4 Of fierce temptations others talk'd,
Of anguish and dismay,
Through what distress they had walk'd
Before they found the way.

5 Ah! then I thought my hopes were vain,
For I had liv'd at ease;
I wish'd for all my fears again
To make me more like these.

6 I had my wish; the Lord disclos'd
The evils of my heart,
And left my naked soul expos'd
To Satan's fiery dart.

7 Alas! "I now must give it up,"
I cried in deep despair:
How could I dream of drawing hope
From what I cannot bear?

8 Again my Saviour brought me aid,
And when he set me free,
"Trust simply on my word," he said,
"And leave the rest to me."

HYMN XXXVI.

Prayer answered by Crosses.

1 I ASK'D the Lord, that I might grow
In faith, and love, and ev'ry grace;

* Rom. v. 20. † Psal. civ. 20. ‡ Psal. cxix. 94.

* Psal. cxv. 2. † Psal cxlii. 7.

Might more of his salvation know,
And seek more earnestly his face.

2 'Twas he who taught me thus to pray,
And he, I trust, has answer'd prayer;
But it has been in such a way,
As almost drove me to despair.

3 I hop'd that in some favour'd hour,
At once he 'd answer my request,
And by his love's constraining power
Subdue my sins, and give me rest.

4 Instead of this, he made me feel
The hidden evils of my heart;
And let the angry powers of hell
Assault my soul in ev'ry part.

5 Yea more, with his own hand he seem'd
Intent to aggravate my woe;
Cross'd all the fair designs I schem'd,
Blasted my gourds, and laid me low.

6 Lord, why is this? I trembling cried,
Wilt thou pursue thy worm to death?
"'Tis in this way," the Lord replied,
"I answer prayer for grace and faith.

7 "These inward trials I employ,
From self and pride to set thee free;
And break thy schemes of earthly joy,
That thou may'st seek thy all in me."

HYMN XXXVII.

I will Trust, and not be Afraid.

1 Begone, unbelief!
My Saviour is near,
And for my relief
Will surely appear:
By prayer let me wrestle,
And he will perform;
With Christ in the vessel,
I smile at the storm.

2 Though dark be my way,
Since he is my guide,
'Tis mine to obey,
'Tis his to provide;
Though cisterns be broken,
And creatures all fail,
The word he has spoken
Shall surely prevail.

3 His love in time past
Forbids me to think
He 'll leave me at last
In trouble to sink:
Each sweet Ebenezer
I have in review,
Confirms his good pleasure
To help me quite through.

4 Determin'd to save,
He watch'd o'er my path,
When, Satan's blind slave,
I sported with death;
And can he have taught me
To trust in his name,
And thus far have brought me,
To put me to shame?

5 Why should I complain
Of want or distress,
Temptation or pain?
He told me no less:
The heirs of salvation,
I know from his word,
Through much tribulation
Must follow their Lord.*

6 How bitter that cup,
No heart can conceive,
Which he drank quite up,
That sinners might live!
His way was much rougher
And darker than mine;
Did Jesus thus suffer,
And shall I repine?

7 Since all that I meet
Shall work for my good,
The bitter is sweet,
The med'cine is food;
Though painful at present,
'Twill cease before long,
And then, O how pleasant,
The conqueror's song!†

HYMN XXXVIII.

Questions to Unbelief.

1 If to Jesus for relief
My soul has fled by prayer,
Why should I give way to grief,
Or heart-consuming care?
Are not all things in his hands?
Has he not his promise pass'd?
Will he then regardless stand,
And let me sink at last?

2 While I know his providence
Disposes each event,
Shall I judge by feeble sense,
And yield to discontent?
If he worms and sparrows feed,
Clothe the grass in rich array,‡
Can he see a child in need,
And turn his eye away?

3 When his name was quite unknown,
And sin my life employed,
Then he watch'd me as his own,
Or I had been destroyed;
Now his mercy-seat I know,
Now by grace am reconcil'd
Would he spare me while a foe,§
To leave me when a child?

4 If he all my wants supplied,
When I disdain'd to pray,
Now his Spirit is my guide,
How can he say me nay?
If he would not give me up,
When my soul against him fought,
Will he disappoint the hope
Which he himself has wrought.

* Acts xiv. 22.
† Rom. viii. 37.
‡ Matt. vi. 26.
§ Rom. v. 10.

5 If he shed his precious blood
To bring me to his fold,
Can I think that meaner good*
He ever will withhold!
Satan, vain is thy device!
Here my hope rests well assur'd,
In that great redemption-price,
I see the whole secur'd.

HYMN XXXIX.

Great Effects by Weak Means.

1 UNBELIEF the soul dismays,
What objections will it raise;
But true faith securely leans
On the promise, in the means.

2 If to faith it once be known,
God has said, "It shall be done,
And in this appointed way;"
Faith has then no more to say.

3 Moses' rod, by faith up-rear'd,†
Through the sea a path prepar'd;
Jericho's devoted wall‡
At the trumpet's sound must fall.

4 With a pitcher and a lamp,§
Gideon overthrew a camp;
And a stone, well aim'd by faith,‖
Prov'd the arm'd Philistine's death.

5 Thus the Lord is pleas'd to try
Those who on his help rely;
By the means he makes it known,
That the power is all his own.

6 Yet the means are not in vain,
If the end we would obtain;
Though the breath of prayer be weak,
None shall find but they who seek.

7 God alone the heart can reach,
Yet the ministers must preach;
'Tis their part the seed to sow,
And 'tis his to make it grow.

HYMN XL.

Why art thou cast down?

1 BE still, my heart! these anxious cares
To thee are burdens, thorns, and snares;
They cast dishonour on thy Lord,
And contradict his gracious word.

2 Brought safely by his hand thus far,
Why wilt thou now give place to fear?
How canst thou want if he provide,
Or lose thy way with such a guide?

3 When first before his mercy-seat,
Thou didst to him thy all commit;
He gave thee warrant, from that hour,
To trust his wisdom, love, and power.

4 Did ever trouble yet befall,
And he refuse to hear thy call?
And has he not his promise past,
That thou shalt overcome at last?

5 Like David, thou may'st comfort draw,
Sav'd from the bear's and lion's paw;
Goliah's rage I may defy,
For God, my Saviour, still is nigh.

6 He who has helped me hitherto,
Will help me all my journey through,
And give me daily cause to raise
New Ebenezers to his praise.

7 Though rough and thorny be the road,
It leads me home, apace, to God;
Then count thy present trials small,
For heaven will make amends for all.

HYMN XLI.

The Way of Access.

1 ONE glance of thine, eternal Lord!
Pierces all nature through;
Nor heaven, nor earth, nor hell afford
A shelter from thy view.

2 The mighty whole, each smaller part,
At once before thee lies;
And every thought of every heart
Is open to thine eyes.

3 Though greatly from myself conceal'd,
Thou see'st my inward frame;
To thee I always stand reveal'd,
Exactly as I am.

4 Since, therefore, I can hardly bear
What in myself I see;
How vile and black must I appear,
Most holy God, to thee?

5 But since my Saviour stands between,
In garments dyed in blood,
'Tis he, instead of me, is seen,
When I approach to God.

6 Thus, though a sinner, I am safe;
He pleads before the throne,
His life and death in my behalf,
And calls my sins his own.

7 What wondrous love, what mysteries,
In this appointment shine!
My breaches of the law are his,*
And his obedience mine.

HYMN XLII.

The Pilgrim's Song.

1 FROM Egypt lately freed
By the Redeemer's grace,
A rough and thorny path we tread,
In hopes to see his face.

2 The flesh dislikes the way,
But faith approves it well;
This only leads to endless day,
All others lead to hell.

3 The promis'd land of peace
Faith keeps in constant view;
How diff'rent from the wilderness
We now are passing through.

* Rom. viii. 32. † Exod. xiv. 21. ‡ Josh. vi. 20.
§ Judges vii. 22. ‖ 1 Sam. xvii. 42.

* 2 Cor. v. 21

4 Here often from our eyes
Clouds hide the light divine;
There we shall have unclouded skies,
Our Sun will always shine.

5 Here griefs, and cares, and pains,
And fears, distress us sore;
But there eternal pleasure reigns,
And we shall weep no more.

6 Lord, pardon our complaints,
We follow at thy call;
The joy prepar'd for suff'ring saints
Will make amends for all.

SIMILAR HYMNS.

Book I. Hymn 10, 13, 21, 22, 24, 27, 40, 43, 44, 51, 56, 63, 76, 88, 107, 115, 126, 130, 131, 136, 142.
Book II. Hymn 30, 31, 84, 87, 92.

IV. COMFORT.

HYMN XLIII.

Faith a New and Comprehensive Sense.

1 Sight, hearing, feeling, taste, and smell,
Are gifts we highly prize;
But faith does singly each excel,
And all the five comprise.

2 More piercing than the eagle's sight,
It views the world unknown,
Surveys the glorious realms of light,
And Jesus on the throne.

3 It hears the mighty voice of God,
And ponders what he saith;
His word and works, his gifts and rod,
Have each a voice to faith.

4 It feels the touch of heavenly power,*
And from that boundless source,
Derives fresh vigour every hour
To run its daily course.

5 The truth and goodness of the Lord
Are suited to its taste;†
Mean is the worldling's pamper'd board,
To faith's perpetual feast.

6 It smells the dear Redeemer's name
Like ointment poured forth;‡
Faith only knows, or can proclaim,
Its savour or its worth.

7 Till saving faith possess the mind,
In vain of sense we boast;
We are but senseless, tasteless, blind,
And deaf, and dead, and lost.

HYMN XLIV.

The Happy Change.

1 How bless'd thy creature is, O Lord,
When, with a single eye,
He views the lustre of thy word,
The day-spring from on high!

2 Through all the storms that veil the skies,
And frown on earthly things,
The Sun of righteousness he eyes,
With healing on his wings.

3 Struck by that light, the human heart,*
A barren soil no more,
Sends the sweet smell of grace abroad,
Where serpents lurk'd before.

4 The soul, a dreary province once
Of Satan's dark domain,
Feels a new empire form'd within,
And owns a heavenly reign.

5 The glorious orb, whose golden beams
The fruitful year control,
Since first, obedient to thy word,
He started from the goal,

6 Has cheer'd the nations with the joys
His orient rays impart;
But, Jesus, 'tis thy light alone
Can shine upon the heart. C.

HYMN XLV.

Retirement.

1 Far from the world, O Lord, I flee,
From strife and tumult far;
From scenes where Satan wages still
His most successful war.

2 The calm retreat, the silent shade,
With prayer and praise agree,
And seem by thy sweet bounty made,
For those who follow thee.

3 There if thy Spirit touch the soul,
And grace her mean abode,
Oh! with what peace, and joy, and love,
She communes with her God.

4 There, like the nightingale, she pours
Her solitary lays,
Nor asks a witness of her song,
Nor thirsts for human praise.

5 Author and guardian of my life,
Sweet source of light divine,
And (all harmonious names in one)
My Saviour, thou art mine.

6 What thanks I owe thee, and what love,
A boundless, endless store,
Shall echo through the realms above,
When time shall be no more. C.

HYMN XLVI.

Jesus my All.

1 Why should I fear the darkest hour,
Or tremble at the tempter's power?
Jesus vouchsafes to be my tower.

2 Though hot the fight, why quit the field?
Why must I either flee or yield,
Since Jesus is my mighty shield?

3 When creature-comforts fade and die,
Worldlings may weep, but why should I?
Jesus still lives, and still is nigh.

* Luke viii. 46. † Psalm cxix. 103. ‡ Solomon's Song, i. 3.

* Isa. xxxv. 7.

4 Though all the flocks and herds were dead,
My soul a famine need not dread,
For Jesus is my living bread.

5 I know not what may soon betide,
Or how my wants shall be supplied;
But Jesus knows and will provide.

6 Though sin would fill me with distress.
The throne of grace I dare address,
For Jesus is my righteousness.

7 Though faint my prayers, and cold my love,
My steadfast hope shall not remove,
While Jesus intercedes above.

8 Against me earth and hell combine,
But on my side is power divine;
Jesus is all, and he is mine.

HYMN XLVII.

The Hidden Life.

1 To tell the Saviour all my wants,
How pleasing is the task!
Nor less to praise him when he grants
Beyond what I can ask.

2 My lab'ring spirit vainly seeks
To tell but half the joy;
With how much tenderness he speaks,
And helps me to reply.

3 Nor were it wise, nor should I choose,
Such secrets to declare;
Like precious wines, their taste they lose,
Expos'd to open air.

4 But this, with boldness, I proclaim,
Nor care if thousands hear,
Sweet is the ointment of his name,
Not life is half so dear.

5 And can you frown, my former friends,
Who knew what once I was,
And blame the song that thus commends
The Man who bore the cross?

6 Trust me, I draw the likeness true,
And not as fancy paints:
Such honour may he give to you,
For such have all his saints. C.

HYMN XLVIII.

Joy and Peace in Believing.

1 SOMETIMES a light surprises
The christian while he sings;
It is the Lord who rises
With healing in his wings;
When comforts are declining,
He grants the soul again,
A season of clear shining,
To cheer it after rain.

2 In holy contemplation,
We sweetly then pursue
The theme of God's salvation,
And find it ever new:
Set free from present sorrow,
We cheerfully can say,
E'en let the unknown to-morrow*
Bring with it what it may.

3 It can bring with it nothing,
But he will bear us through;
Who gives the lilies clothing,
Will clothe his people too:
Beneath the spreading heavens,
No creature but is fed;
And he who feeds the ravens,
Will give his children bread.

4 Though vine nor fig-tree neither
Their wonted fruit shall bear,†
Though all the field should wither,
Nor flocks nor herds be there;
Yet God the same abiding,
His praise shall tune my voice;
For while in him confiding
I cannot but rejoice.

HYMN XLIX.

True Pleasures.

1 LORD, my soul with pleasure springs,
When Jesus' name I hear,
And when God the Spirit brings
The word of promise near:
Beauties, too, in holiness,
Still delighted I perceive;
Nor have words that can express
The joys thy precepts give.

2 Cloth'd in sanctity and grace,
How sweet it is to see
Those who love thee as they pass,
Or when they wait on thee!
Pleasant too, to sit and tell,
What we owe to love divine,
Till our bosoms grateful swell,
And eyes begin to shine.

3 Those the comforts I possess,
Which God shall still increase;
All his ways are pleasantness,‡
And all his paths are peace.
Nothing Jesus did or spoke,
Henceforth let me ever slight;
For I love his easy yoke,§
And find his burden light. C.

HYMN L.

The Christian.

1 HONOUR and happiness unite,
To make the christian's name a praise:
How fair the scene, how clear the light,
That fills the remnant of his days!

2 A kingly character he bears,
No change his priestly office knows;
Unfading is the crown he wears,
His joys can never reach a close.

3 Adorn'd with glory from on high,
Salvation shines upon his face;
His robe is of the ethereal dye,
His steps are dignity and grace.

* Matth. vi. 34.
† Hab. iii. 17, 18.
‡ Prov. iii. 17.
§ Matth. xi. 30.

4 Inferior honours he disdains,
Nor stoops to take applause from earth,
The King of kings himself maintains
The expenses of his heavenly birth.

5 The noblest creature seen below,
Ordain'd to fill a throne above;
God gives him all he can bestow,
His kingdom of eternal love!

6 My soul is ravish'd at the thought!
Methinks from earth I see him rise!
Angels congratulate his lot,
And shout him welcome to the skies! C.

HYMN LI.

Lively Hope and Gracious Fear.

1 I was a grov'lling creature once,
And basely cleav'd to earth;
I wanted spirit to renounce
The clod that gave me birth.

2 But God has breath'd upon a worm,
And sent me, from above,
Wings, such as clothe an angel's form,
The wings of joy and love.

3 With these to Pisgah's top I fly,
And there delighted stand,
To view beyond a shining sky
The spacious promis'd land.

4 The Lord of all the vast domain
Has promis'd it to me;
The length and breadth of all the plain,
As far as faith can see.

5 How glorious is my privilege!
To thee for help I call;
I stand upon a mountain's edge,
O save me, lest I fall!

6 Though much exalted in the Lord,
My strength is not my own;
Then let me tremble at his word,
And none shall cast me down. C.

HYMN LII.

Confidence.

1 Yes! since God himself has said it,
On the promise I rely;
His good word demands my credit,
What can unbelief reply?
He is strong, and can fulfil,
He is truth, and therefore will.

2 As to all the doubts and questions
Which my spirit often grieve,
These are Satan's sly suggestions,
And I need no answer give;
He would fain destroy my hope,
But the promise bears it up.

3 Sure the Lord thus far has brought me,
By his watchful tender care;
Sure 'tis he himself has taught me
How to seek his face by prayer:
After so much mercy past,
Will he give me up at last?

4 True, I 've been a foolish creature,
And have sinn'd against his grace,
But forgiveness is his nature,
Though he justly hides his face:
Ere he called me, well he knew*
What a heart like mine would do

5 In my Saviour's intercession
Therefore I will still confide!
Lord, accept my free confession,
I have sinn'd, but thou hast died:†
This is all I have to plead,
This is all the plea I need.

HYMN LIII.

Peace Restored.

1 Oh! speak that gracious word again,
And cheer my drooping heart!
No voice but thine can soothe my pain,
Or bid my fears depart.

2 And canst thou still vouchsafe to own
A wretch so vile as I?
And may I still approach thy throne,
And Abba, Father, cry?

3 O, then, let saints and angels join,
And help me to proclaim
The grace that heal'd a breach like mine,
And put my foes to shame!

4 How oft did Satan's cruel boast
My troubled soul affright!
He told me I was surely lost,
And, God had left me quite.‡

5 Guilt made me fear, lest all were true
The lying tempter said;
But now the Lord appears in view,
My enemy is fled.

6 My Saviour, by his powerful word,
Has turn'd my night to day;
And his salvation's joy 's restored,
Which I had sinn'd away.

7 Dear Lord, I wonder and adore!
Thy grace is all divine!
O keep me, that I sin no more
Against such love as thine!

HYMN LIV.

Hear what he has done for my Soul.

1 Sav'd by blood, I live to tell
What the love of Christ hath done;
He redeem'd my soul from hell,
Of a rebel made a son:
Oh! I tremble still, to think
How secure I liv'd in sin;
Sporting on destruction's brink,
Yet preserv'd from falling in.

2 In his own appointed hour,
To my heart the Saviour spoke;
Touch'd me by his Spirit's power,
And my dang'rous slumber broke,
Then I saw and own'd my guilt,
Soon my gracious Lord replied:

* Isa. xlviii. 8. † Rom. viii. 34. ‡ Psalm lxxi. 11.

"Fear not, I my blood have spilt,
'Twas for such as thee I died."

3 Shame and wonder, joy and love,
All at once possess'd my heart;
Can I hope thy grace to prove
After acting such a part!
"Thou hast greatly sinn'd," he said,
"But I freely all forgive;
I myself thy debt have paid,
Now I bid thee rise and live."

4 Come, my fellow-sinners, try,
Jesus' heart is full of love!
O that you, as well as I,
May his wondrous mercy prove.
He has sent me to declare,
All is ready, all is free:
Why should any soul despair,
When he sav'd a wretch like me?

HYMN LV.

Freedom from Care.

1 WHILE I liv'd without the Lord,
(If I might be said to live,)
Nothing could relief afford,
Nothing satisfaction give.

2 Empty hopes and groundless fear
Mov'd by turns my anxious mind;
Like a feather in the air,
Made the sport of every wind.

3 Now, I see, whate'er betide,
All is well if Christ be mine;
He has promis'd to provide,
I have only to resign.

4 When a sense of sin and thrall
Forc'd me to the sinner's Friend,
He engaged to manage all,
By the way and to the end.

5 "Cast," he said, "on me thy care,*
'Tis enough that I am nigh;
I will all thy burdens bear,
I will all thy wants supply.

6 "Simply follow as I lead,
Do not reason, but believe;
Call on me in time of need,
Thou shalt surely help receive."

7 Lord, I would, I do submit,
Gladly yield my all to thee;
What thy wisdom sees most fit,
Must be surely best for me.

8 Only, when the way is rough,
And the coward flesh would start,
Let thy promise and thy love
Cheer and animate my heart.

HYMN LVI.

Humiliation and Praise.

(Imitated from the German.)

1 WHEN the wounded spirit hears
The voice of Jesus' blood,
How the message stops the tears
Which else in vain had flowed:
Pardon, grace, and peace proclaim'd,
And the sinner call'd a child;
Then the stubborn heart is tam'd,
Renew'd and reconcil'd.

2 Oh! 'twas grace indeed to spare
And save a wretch like me!
Men or angels could not bear
What I have offer'd thee:
Were thy bolts at their command,
Hell ere now had been my place;
Thou alone could'st silent stand,
And wait to show thy grace.

3 If, in one created mind,
The tenderness and love
Of thy saints on earth were join'd,
With all the hosts above;
Still that love were weak and poor,
If compar'd, my Lord, with thine;
Far too scanty to endure
A heart so vile as mine.

4 Wondrous mercy I have found,
But, ah! how faint my praise!
Must I be a cumber-ground,
Unfruitful all my days?
Do I in thy garden grow,
Yet produce thee only leaves!
Lord, forbid it should be so!
The thought my spirit grieves.

5 Heavy charges Satan brings,
To fill me with distress;
Let me hide beneath thy wings,
And plead thy righteousness.
Lord, to thee for help I call,
'Tis thy promise bids me come:
Tell him thou hast paid for all,
And that shall strike him dumb.

HYMN LVII.

For the Poor.

1 WHEN Hagar found the bottle spent,*
And wept o'er Ishmael,
A message from the Lord was sent
To guide her to a well.

2 Should not Elijah's cake and cruise†
Convince us at this day,
A gracious God will not refuse
Provisions by the way?

3 His saints and servants shall be fed,
The promise is secure;
"Bread shall be given them," as he said,
"Their water shall be sure."‡

4 Repasts far richer they shall prove,
Than all earth's dainties are;
'Tis sweet to taste a Saviour's love,
Though in the meanest fare.

5 To Jesus, then, your trouble bring,
Nor murmur at your lot;
While you are poor, and he is King,
You shall not be forgot. C.

* Psalm lv 22. 1 Peter v. 7.

* Gen. xxi. 19. † 1 Kings xvii. 14. ‡ Isa. xxxiii. 16

HYMN LVIII.

Home in View.

1 As when the weary trav'ller gains
The height of some o'erlooking hill,
His heart revives, if cross the plains
He eyes his home, though distant still.

2 While he surveys the much-lov'd spot,
He slights the space that lies between;
His past fatigues are now forgot,
Because his journey's end is seen.

3 Thus, when the christian pilgrim views,
By faith, his mansion in the skies,
The sight his fainting strength renews,
And wings his speed to reach the prize:

4 The thought of home his spirit cheers,
No more he grieves for troubles past;
Nor any future trial fears,*
So he may safe arrive at last.

5 'Tis there, he says, I am to dwell
With Jesus, in the realms of day;
Then I shall bid my cares farewell,
And he will wipe my tears away.

6 Jesus, on thee our hope depends,
To lead us on to thine abode:
Assur'd our home will make amends
For all our toil while on the road.

SIMILAR HYMNS.

Book I. Hymn 4, 7, 9, 11, 25, 35, 36, 39, 41, 46, 47, 48, 70, 95, 128, 132.
Book II. Hymn 45, 46, 47.

V. DEDICATION AND SURRENDER.

HYMN LIX.

Old Things are passed away.

1 Let worldly minds the world pursue,
It has no charms for me;
Once I admir'd its trifles too,
But grace has set me free.

2 Its pleasures now no longer please,
No more content afford;
Far from my heart be joys like these,
Now I have seen the Lord.

3 As by the light of op'ning day
The stars are all conceal'd;
So earthly pleasures fade away,
When Jesus is reveal'd.

4 Creatures no more divide my choice,
I bid them all depart;
His name, and love, and gracious voice,
Have fix'd my roving heart.

5 Now, Lord, I would be thine alone,
And wholly live to thee;
But may I hope that thou wilt own
A worthless worm like me?

6 Yes! though of sinners I 'm the worst,
I cannot doubt thy will;
For if thou hadst not lov'd me first,
I had refus'd thee still.*

HYMN LX.

The Power of Grace.

1 Happy the birth where grace presides,
To form the future life;
In wisdom's paths the soul she guides,
Remote from noise and strife.

2 Since I have known the Saviour's name,
And what for me he bore,
No more I toil for empty fame,
I thirst for gold no more.

3 Plac'd by his hand in this retreat,
I make his love my theme;
And see that all the world calls great,
Is but a waking dream.

4 Since he has rank'd my worthless name
Amongst his favour'd few,
Let the mad world who scoff at them,
Revile and hate me too.

5 O thou, whose voice the dead can raise,
And soften hearts of stone,
And teach the dumb to sing thy praise!
This work is all thine own.

6 Thy wond'ring saints rejoice to see
A wretch like me restor'd;
And point, and say, "How chang'd is he,
Who once defied the Lord!"

7 Grace bid me live, and taught my tongue
To aim at notes divine;
And grace accepts my feeble song;
The glory, Lord, be thine!

HYMN LXI.

My Soul thirsteth for God.

1 I thirst, but not as once I did,
The vain delights of earth to share;
Thy wounds, Emmanuel, all forbid
That I should seek my pleasures there.

2 It was the sight of thy dear cross,
First wean'd my soul from earthly things;
And taught me to esteem as dross
The mirth of fools and pomp of kings.

3 I want that grace that springs from thee,
That quickens all things where it flows,
And makes a wretched thorn like me,
Bloom as the myrtle, or the rose.

4 Dear fountain of delight unknown!
No longer sink below the brim;
But overflow, and pour me down
A living and life-giving stream!

5 For sure, of all the plants that share
The notice of thy Father's eye,
None proves less grateful to his care,
Or yields him meaner fruit than I. C.

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* Acts xx. 24.

* Jer. xxxi. 3.

HYMN LXII.

Love constraining to Obedience.

1 No strength of nature can suffice
To serve the Lord aright;
And what she has, she misapplies,
For want of clearer light.

2 How long beneath the law I lay
In bondage and distress!
I toil'd the precept to obey,
But toil'd without success.

3 Then, to abstain from outward sin
Was more than I could do;
Now, I feel its power within,
I feel I hate it too.

4 Then all my servile works were done,
A righteousness to raise;
Now, freely chosen in the Son,
I freely choose his ways.

5 What shall I do, was then the word,
That I may worthier grow?
What shall I render to the Lord?
Is my inquiry now.

6 To see the law by Christ fulfill'd,
And hear his pard'ning voice,
Changes a slave into a child,*
And duty into choice. C.

HYMN LXIII.

The Heart healed and changed by Mercy.

1 SIN enslav'd me many years,
And led me bound and blind;
Till at length a thousand fears
Came swarming o'er my mind.
Where, I said in deep distress,
Will these sinful pleasures end?
How shall I secure my peace,
And make the Lord my friend?

2 Friends and ministers said much
The gospel to enforce;
But my blindness still was such,
I chose a legal course:
Much I fasted, watch'd, and strove,
Scarce would show my face abroad;
Fear'd, almost, to speak or move,
A stranger still to God.

3 Thus, afraid to trust his grace,
Long time did I rebel;
Till, despairing of my case,
Down at his feet I fell:
Then my stubborn heart he broke,
And subdued me to his sway,
By a simple word he spoke,
"Thy sins are done away." C.

HYMN LXIV.

Hatred of Sin.

1 HOLY Lord God! I love thy truth,
Nor dare thy least commandment slight,
Yet pierc'd by sin, the serpent's tooth,
I mourn the anguish of the bite.

2 But though the poison lurks within,
Hope bids me still with patience wait,
Till death shall set me free from sin,
Free from the only thing I hate.

3 Had I a throne above the rest,
Where angels and archangels dwell,
One sin, unslain, within my breast,
Would make that heaven as dark as hell.

4 The pris'ner, sent to breathe fresh air,
And bless'd with liberty again,
Would mourn, were he condemn'd to wear
One link of all his former chain.

5 But, oh! no foe invades the bliss,
When glory crowns the christian's head;
One view of Jesus as he is,
Will strike all sin for ever dead. C.

HYMN LXV.

*The Child.**

1 QUIET, Lord, my froward heart,
Make me teachable and mild,
Upright, simple, free from art,
Make me as a weaned child:
From distrust and envy free,
Pleas'd with all that pleases thee.

2 What thou shalt to-day provide,
Let me as a child receive;
What to-morrow may betide,
Calmly to thy wisdom leave:
'Tis enough that thou wilt care,
Why should I the burden bear?

3 As a little child relies
On a care beyond his own;
Knows he 's neither strong nor wise;
Fears to stir a step alone:
Let me thus with thee abide,
As my Father, guard, and guide.

4 Thus preserv'd from Satan's wiles,
Safe from dangers, free from fears,
May I live upon thy smiles,
Till the promis'd hour appears,
When the sons of God shall prove
All their Father's boundless love.

HYMN LXVI.

True Happiness.

1 FIX my heart and eyes on thine!
What are other objects worth?
But to see thy glory shine
Is a heaven begun on earth:
Trifles can no longer move;
Oh! I tread on all beside,
When I feel my Saviour's love,
And remember how he died!

* Rom. iii. 31.

* Psal. cxxxi. 2; Matt. xviii. 3, 4.

2 Now my search is at an end,
Now my wishes rove no more!
Thus my moments I would spend,
Love, and wonder, and adore:
Jesus, source of excellence!
All thy glorious love reveal!
Kingdoms shall not bribe me hence,
While this happiness I feel.

3 Take my heart, 'tis all thine own,
To thy will my spirit frame;
Thou shalt reign, and thou alone,
Over all I have or am:
If a foolish thought shall dare
To rebel against thy word,
Slay it, Lord, and do not spare,
Let it feel thy Spirit's sword!

4 Making thus the Lord my choice,
I have nothing more to choose,
But to listen to thy voice,
And my will in thine to lose:
Thus whatever may betide,
I shall safe and happy be,
Still content and satisfied,
Having all in having thee.

HYMN LXVII.

The Happy Debtor.

1 Ten thousand talents once I owed,
And nothing had to pay,
But Jesus freed me from the load,
And wash'd my debt away.

2 Yet since the Lord forgave my sin,
And blotted out my score,
Much more indebted I have been
Than e'er I was before.

3 My guilt is cancell'd quite, I know,
And satisfaction made;
But the vast debt of love I owe
Can never be repaid.

4 The love I owe for sin forgiven,
For power to believe,
For present peace and promis'd heaven,
No angel can conceive.

5 That love of thine, thou sinner's Friend!
Witness thy bleeding heart!
My little all can ne'er extend
To pay a thousandth part.

6 Nay more, the poor returns I make,
I first from thee obtain;*
And 'tis of grace, that thou wilt take
Such poor returns again.

7 'Tis well, it shall my glory be
(Let who will boast their store)
In time and to eternity,
To owe thee more and more.

SIMILAR HYMNS.

Book I. Hymn 27, 50, 70, 93, 122.
Book II. Hymn 23, 90.

* 1 Chron. xxix. 14.

VI. CAUTIONS.

HYMN LXVIII.

The New Convert.

1 The new-born child of gospel-grace,
Like some fair tree when summer 's nigh,
Beneath Emmanuel's shining face,
Lifts up his blooming branch on high.

2 No fears he feels, he sees no foes,
No conflict yet his faith employs,
Nor has he learnt to whom he owes
The strength and peace his soul enjoys.

3 But sin soon darts its cruel sting,
And comforts sinking day by day,
What seem'd his own, a self-fed spring,
Proves but a brook that glides away.

4 When Gideon arm'd his num'rous host,
The Lord soon made his numbers less;
And said, lest Israel vainly boast,*
"My arm procur'd me thus success."

5 Thus will he bring our spirits down,
And draw our ebbing comforts low,
That, sav'd by grace, but not our own,
We may not claim the praise we owe.

C.

HYMN LXIX.

True and False Comforts.

1 O God, whose favourable eye
The sin-sick soul revives,
Holy and heavenly is the joy
Thy shining presence gives:

2 Not such as hypocrites suppose,
Who with a graceless heart,
Taste not of thee, but drink a dose,
Prepar'd by Satan's art.

3 Intoxicating joys are theirs,
Who, while they boast their light,
And seem to soar above the stars,
Are plunging into night.

4 Lull'd in a soft and fatal sleep,
They sin, and yet rejoice;
Were they indeed the Saviour's sheep,
Would they not hear his voice?

5 Be mine the comforts that reclaim
The soul from Satan's power,
That make me blush for what I am,
And hate my sin the more.

6 'Tis joy enough, my All in All,
At thy dear feet to lie;
Thou wilt not let me lower fall,
And none can higher fly.

C.

HYMN LXX.

True and False Zeal.

1 Zeal is that pure and heavenly flame
The fire of love supplies;
While that which often bears the name
Is self in a disguise.

* Judges vii.

2 True zeal is merciful and mild,
Can pity and forbear;
The false is headstrong, fierce, and wild,
And breathes revenge and war.

3 While zeal for truth the christian warms,
He knows the worth of peace;
But self contends for names and forms,
Its party to increase.

4 Zeal has attain'd its highest aim,
Its end is satisfied,
If sinners love the Saviour's name,
Nor seeks it aught beside.

5 But self, however well employed,
Has its own ends in view,
And says, as boasting Jehu cried,*
"Come, see what I can do."

6 Self may its poor reward obtain,
And be applauded here,
But zeal the best applause will gain
When Jesus shall appear.

7 Dear Lord, the idol self dethrone,
And from our hearts remove,
And let no zeal by us be shown
But that which springs from love.

HYMN LXXI.

A Living and a Dead Faith.

1 THE Lord receives his highest praise
From humble minds and hearts sincere,
While all the loud professor says
Offends the righteous Judge's ear.

2 To walk as children of the day,
To mark the precepts' holy light,
To wage the warfare, watch and pray,
Show who are pleasing in his sight.

3 Not words alone it cost the Lord,
To purchase pardon for his own;
Nor will a soul, by grace restor'd,
Return the Saviour words alone.

4 With golden bells, the priestly vest,†
And rich pomegranates border'd round,
The need of holiness express'd,
And call'd for fruit as well as sound.

5 Easy, indeed, it were to reach
A mansion in the courts above,
If swelling words and fluent speech
Might serve instead of faith and love.

6 But none shall gain the blissful place,
Or God's unclouded glory see,
Who talks of free and sovereign grace,
Unless that grace has made him free. C.

HYMN LXXII.

Abuse of the Gospel.

1 Too many, Lord, abuse thy grace,
In this licentious day;
And while they boast they see thy face,
They turn their own away.

2 Thy book displays a gracious light,
That can the blind restore;
But these are dazzled by the sight,
And blinded still the more.

3 The pardon such presume upon
They do not beg, but steal;
And when they plead it at thy throne,
Oh! where 's the Spirit's seal?

4 Was it for this, ye lawless tribe,
The dear Redeemer bled?
Is this the grace the saints imbibe
From Christ the living Head?

5 Ah! Lord, we know thy chosen few
Are fed with heavenly fare;
But these, the wretched husks they chew,
Proclaim them what they are.

6 The liberty our hearts implore,
Is not to live in sin,
But still to wait at Wisdom's door,
Till Mercy calls us in. C.

HYMN LXXIII.

The Narrow Way.

1 WHAT thousands never knew the road!
What thousands hate it when 'tis known!
None but the chosen tribes of God
Will seek or choose it for their own.

2 A thousand ways in ruin end,
One only leads to joys on high;
By that my willing steps ascend,
Pleas'd with a journey to the sky.

3 No more I ask, or hope to find
Delight or happiness below;
Sorrow may as well possess the mind
That feeds where thorns and thistles grow.

4 The joy that fades is not for me,
I seek immortal joys above:
There glory without end shall be
The bright reward of faith and love.

5 Cleave to the world, ye sordid worms!
Contented lick your native dust;
But God shall fight, with all his storms,
Against the idol of your trust. C.

HYMN LXXIV.

Dependence.

1 To keep the lamp alive,
With oil we fill the bowl;
'Tis water makes the willow thrive,
And grace that feeds the soul.

2 The Lord's unsparing hand
Supplies the living stream,
It is not at our own command,
But still deriv'd from him.

3 Beware of Peter's word,*
Nor confidently say,
"I never will deny thee, Lord,"
But grant I never may.

* 2 Kings x. 16. † Exod. xxviii. 33.

* Matth. xxvi. 33.

4 Man's wisdom is to seek
His strength in God alone;
And e'en an angel would be weak,
Who trusted in his own.

5 Retreat beneath his wings,
And in his grace confide;
This more exalts the King of kings,*
Than all your works beside.

6 In Jesus is our store,
Grace issues from his throne;
Whoever says, "I want no more,"
Confesses he has none. C.

HYMN LXXV.

Not of Works.

1 Grace, triumphant in the throne,
Scorns a rival, reigns alone!
Come, and bow beneath her sway,
Cast your idol-works away.
Works of man, when made his plea,
Never shall accepted be;
Fruits of pride (vain-glorious worm!)
Are the best he can perform.

2 Self, the god his soul adores,
Influences all his powers;
Jesus is a slighted name,
Self-advancement all his aim,
But when God the Judge shall come,
To pronounce the final doom,
Then for rocks and hills to hide
All his works and all his pride!

3 Still the boasting heart replies,
What! the worthy and the wise,
Friends to temperance and peace,
Have not these a righteousness?
Banish ev'ry vain pretence
Built on human excellence;
Perish ev'ry thing in man,
But the grace that never can. C.

HYMN LXXVI.

Sin's Deceit.

1 Sin, when view'd by scripture-light,
Is a horrid, hateful sight;
But when seen in Satan's glass,
Then it wears a pleasing face.

2 When the gospel-trumpet sounds,
When I think how grace abounds,
When I feel sweet peace within,
Then I 'd rather die than sin.

3 When the cross I view by faith,
Sin is madness, poison, death;
Tempt me not, 'tis all in vain,
Sure I ne'er can yield again.

4 Satan, for a while debarr'd,
When he finds me off my guard,
Puts his glass before my eyes,
Quickly other thoughts arise.

5 What before excited fears,
Rather pleasing now appears;
If a sin, it seems so small,
Or, perhaps, no sin at all.

6 Often thus, through sin's deceit,
Grief, and shame, and loss I meet;
Like a fish, my soul mistook,
Saw the bait, but not the hook.

7 O my Lord! what shall I say?
How can I presume to pray?
Not a word have I to plead,
Sins like mine are black indeed!

8 Made by past experience wise,
Let me learn thy word to prize;
Taught by what I 've felt before,
Let me Satan's glass abhor.

HYMN LXXVII.

Are there Few that shall be Saved?

1 Destruction's dang'rous road,
What multitudes pursue!
While that which leads the soul to God,
Is known or sought by few.

2 Believers enter in
By Christ, the living gate:
But they who will not leave their sin,
Complain it is too strait.

3 If self must be denied,
And sin forsaken quite,
They rather choose the way that 's wide,
And strive to think it right.

4 Encompass'd by a throng,
On numbers they depend;
So many surely can't be wrong,
And miss a happy end.

5 But numbers are no mark
That men will right be found,
A few were sav'd in Noah's ark,*
For many millions drown'd.

6 Obey the gospel-call,
And enter while you may!
The flock of Christ is always small,†
And none are safe but they.

7 Lord, open sinners' eyes,
Their awful state to see;
And make them, ere the storm arise,
To thee for safety flee.

HYMN LXXVIII.

The Sluggard.

1 The wishes that the sluggard frames,‡
Of course must fruitless prove;
With folded arms he stands and dreams,
But has no heart to move.

2 His field from others may be known,
The fence is broken through;
The ground with weeds is overgrown,
And no good crop in view.

* John vi. 29.

* 1 Peter iii. 20. † Luke xii. 32.
‡ Prov. vi. 10; xx. 4; xxii. 13; xxiv. 30.

3 No hardship he, nor toil, can bear,
No difficulty meet;
He wastes his hours at home, for fear
Of lions in the street.

4 What wonder, then, if sloth and sleep
Distress and famine bring!
Could he in harvest hope to reap,
Who would not sow in spring?

5 'Tis often thus in soul-concerns:
We gospel-sluggards see,
Who, if a wish would serve their turns,
Might true believers be.

6 But when the preacher bids them watch,
And seek, and strive, and pray,*
At ev'ry poor excuse they catch,
A lion in the way!

7 To use the means of grace, how loth!
We call them still in vain;
They yield to their beloved sloth,
And fold their arms again.

8 Dear Saviour, let thy power appear,
The outward call to aid;
These drowsy souls can only hear
The voice that wakes the dead.

HYMN LXXIX.

Not in Word, but in Power.

1 How soon the Saviour's gracious call,
Disarm'd the rage of bloody Saul!†
Jesus, the knowledge of thy name,
Changes the lion to a lamb!

2 Zaccheus, when he knew the Lord,‡
What he had gain'd by wrong, restor'd;
And of the wealth he priz'd before,
He gave the half to feed the poor.

3 The woman who so vile had been,§
When brought to weep o'er pardon'd sin,
Was from her evil ways estrang'd,
And show'd that grace her heart had chang'd.

4 And can we think the power of grace
Is lost, by change of time and place?
Then it was mighty, all allow,
And is it but a notion now?

5 Can they whom pride and fashion sway,
Who Mammon and the world obey,
In envy or contention live,
Presume that they indeed believe?

6 True faith unites to Christ the root,
By him producing holy fruit;
And they who no such fruit can show,
Still on the stock of nature grow.

7 Lord, let thy word effectual prove,
To work in us obedient love!
And may each one who hears it, dread
A name to live, and yet be dead.‖

* 1 Cor. ix. 24; Luke xiii. 24. † Acts ix. 6.
‡ Luke xix. 8. § Luke vii. 47. ‖ Rev. iii. 1.

SIMILAR HYMNS

Book I. Hymn 8, 20, 85, 87, 91, 104, 125, 139, 141.
Book II. Hymn 34, 49, 86, 91, 99.

VII. PRAISE.

HYMN LXXX.

Praise for Faith.

1 Of all the gifts thine hand bestows,
Thou giver of all good!
Not heaven itself a richer knows,
Than my Redeemer's blood.

2 Faith, too, the blood-receiving grace,
From the same hand we gain;
Else, sweetly as it suits our case,
That gift had been in vain.

3 Till thou thy teaching power apply,
Our hearts refuse to see,
And weak, as a distemper'd eye,
Shut out the view of thee.

4 Blind to the merits of thy Son,
What misery we endure!
Yet fly that hand, from which alone
We could expect a cure.

5 We praise thee, and would praise thee more
To thee our all we owe;
The precious Saviour and the power
That makes him precious too. C.

HYMN LXXXI.

Grace and Providence.

1 Almighty King! whose wondrous hand
Supports the weight of sea and land,
Whose grace is such a boundless store,
No heart shall break that sighs for more.

2 Thy providence supplies my food,
And 'tis thy blessing makes it good;
My soul is nourish'd by thy word,
Let soul and body praise the Lord.

3 My streams of outward comfort came
From him, who built this earthly frame;
Whate'er I want his bounty gives,
By whom my soul for ever lives.

4 Either his hand preserves from pain,
Or, if I feel it, heals again;
From Satan's malice shields my breast,
Or over-rules it for the best.

5 Forgive the song that falls so low
Beneath the gratitude I owe!
It means thy praise, however poor,
An angel's song can do no more. C.

HYMN LXXXII.

Praise for Redeeming Love.

1 Let us love, and sing and wonder,
Let us praise the Saviour's name!
He has hush'd the law's loud thunder,
He has quench'd Mount Sinai's flame:

He has wash'd us with his blood,
He has brought us nigh to God.

2 Let us love—the Lord who bought us,
Pitied us when enemies,
Call'd us by his grace, and taught us,
Gave us ears, and gave us eyes:
He has wash'd us with his blood,
He presents our souls to God.

3 Let us sing,—though fierce temptations
Threaten hard to bear us down;
For the Lord, our strong salvation,
Holds in view the conq'ror's crown:*
He who wash'd us with his blood,
Soon will bring us home to God.

4 Let us wonder,—grace and justice
Join, and point to mercy's store!
When through grace in Christ our trust is,
Justice smiles, and asks no more:
He who wash'd us with his blood,
Has secur'd our way to God.

5 Let us praise,—and join the chorus
Of the saints enthron'd on high;
Here they trusted him before us,
Now their praises fill the sky:†
"Thou hast wash'd us with thy blood;
Thou art worthy, Lamb of God!"

6 Hark, the name of Jesus sounded
Loud from golden harps above!
Lord, we blush, and are confounded,
Faint our praises, cold our love!
Wash our souls and songs with blood,
For by thee we come to God.

HYMN LXXXIII.

I will Praise the Lord at all Times.

1 Winter has a joy for me,
While the Saviour's charms I read,
Lowly, meek, from blemish free,
In the snow-drop's pensive head.

2 Spring returns, and brings along
Life-invigorating suns;
Hark! the turtle's plaintive song,
Seems to speak his dying groans!

3 Summer has a thousand charms,
All expressive of his worth;
'Tis his sun that lights and warms,
His the air that cools the earth.

4 What! has autumn left to say
Nothing of a Saviour's grace?
Yes, the beams of milder day
Tell me of his smiling face.

5 Light appears with early dawn;
While the sun makes haste to rise,
See his bleeding beauties drawn
On the blushes of the skies.

6 Evening, with a silent pace,
Slowly moving in the west,
Shows an emblem of his grace,
Points to an eternal rest. C.

* Rev. ii. 10. † Rev. v. 9.

HYMN LXXXIV.

Perseverance.

1 Rejoice, believer, in the Lord,
Who makes your cause his own;
The hope that 's built upon his word
Can ne'er be overthrown.

2 Though many foes beset your road,
And feeble is your arm;
Your life is hid with Christ in God,*
Beyond the reach of harm.

3 Weak as you are, you shall not faint,
Or, fainting, shall not die,
Jesus, the strength of ev'ry saint,†
Will aid you from on high.

4 Though sometimes unperceiv'd by sense,
Faith sees him always near,
A guide, a glory, a defence;
Then what have you to fear?

5 As surely as he overcame,
And triumph'd once for you,
So surely you that love his name,
Shall triumph in him too.

HYMN LXXXV.

Salvation.

1 Salvation! what a glorious plan,
How suited to our need!
The grace that raises fallen man
Is wonderful indeed!

2 'Twas wisdom form'd the vast design,
To ransom us when lost;
And love's unfathomable mine
Provided all the cost.

3 Strict Justice, with approving look,
The holy covenant seal'd;
And Truth and Power undertook
The whole should be fulfill'd.

4 Truth, Wisdom, Justice, Power, and Love,
In all their glory shone,
When Jesus left the courts above,
And died to save his own.

5 Truth, Wisdom, Justice, Power, and Love,
Are equally displayed;
Now Jesus reigns enthron'd above,
Our Advocate and Head.

6 Now sin appears deserving death,
Most hateful and abhorr'd;
And yet the sinner lives by faith,
And dares approach the Lord.

HYMN LXXXVI.

Reigning Grace.

1 Now, may the Lord reveal his face,
And teach our stamm'ring tongues
To make his sovereign, reigning grace,‡
The subject of our songs!
No sweeter subject can invite
A sinner's heart to sing,

* Col. iii. 3. † Isa. xl. 29. ‡ Rom. v. 21.

Or more display the glorious right
Of our exalted King.

2 This subject fills the starry plains
With wonder, joy, and love;
And furnishes the noblest strains
For all the harps above:
While the redeem'd in praise combine
To grace upon the throne,*
Angels in solemn chorus join,
And make the theme their own.

3 Grace reigns to pardon crimson sins,
To melt the hardest hearts;
And from the word it once begins,†
It never more departs.
The world and Satan strive in vain
Against the chosen few;‡
Secûr'd by grace's conqu'ring reign,
They all shall conquer too.

4 Grace tills the soil, and sows the seeds,
Provides the sun and rain;
Till from the tender blade proceeds
The ripen'd harvest-grain.
'Twas grace that call'd our souls at first;
By grace thus far we 're come;
And grace will help us through the worst,
And lead us safely home.

5 Lord, when this changing life is past,
If we may see thy face,
How shall we praise and love at last,
And sing the reign of grace!§
Yet let us aim, while here below,
Thy mercy to display;
And own, at least, the debt we owe,
Although we cannot pay.

HYMN LXXXVII.

Praise to the Redeemer.

1 Prepare a thankful song
To the Redeemer's name!
His praises should employ each tongue,
And ev'ry heart inflame!

2 He laid his glory by,
And dreadful pains endur'd,
That rebels, such as you and I,
From wrath might be secur'd.

3 Upon the cross he died,
Our debt of sin to pay;
The blood and water from his side
Wash guilt and filth away.

4 And now he pleading stands,
For us, before the throne,
And answers all the law's demands
With what himself hath done.

5 He sees us, willing slaves,
To sin, and Satan's power;
But, with an outstretch'd arm, he saves,
In his appointed hour.

6 The Holy Ghost he sends,
Our stubborn souls to move,
To make his enemies his friends,
And conquer them by love.

7 The love of sin departs,
The life of grace takes place,
Soon as his voice invites our hearts
To rise and seek his face.

8 The world and Satan rage,
But he their power controls;
His wisdom, love, and truth, engage
Protection for our souls.

9 Though press'd, we will not yield,
But shall prevail at length:
For Jesus is our sun and shield,
Our righteousness and strength.

10 Assur'd that Christ, our King,
Will put our foes to flight,
We on the field of battle sing,
And triumph while we fight.

HYMN LXXXVIII.

Man, by Nature, Grace, and Glory.

1 Lord, what is man! extremes how wide
In this mysterious nature join!
The flesh, to worms and dust allied,
The soul, immortal and divine!

2 Divine at first, a holy flame,
Kindled by the Almighty's breath;
Till, stain'd by sin, it soon became
The seat of darkness, strife, and death.

3 But Jesus, oh! amazing grace!
Assum'd our nature as his own,
Obeyed and suffer'd in our place.
Then took it with him to his throne.

4 Now, what is man, when grace reveals
The virtue of a Saviour's blood!
Again a life divine he feels,
Despises earth, and walks with God.

5 And what, in yonder realms above,
Is ransom'd man ordain'd to be!
With honour, holiness, and love,
No seraph more adorn'd than he.

6 Nearest the throne, and first in song,
Man shall his hallelujahs raise;
While wond'ring angels round him throng,
And swell the chorus of his praise.

SIMILAR HYMNS.

Book I. Hymn 57, 58, 59, 79, 80.
Book II. Hymn 37, 38, 39, 41, 42.

VIII. SHORT HYMNS.

BEFORE SERMON.

HYMN LXXXIX.

Confirm the hope thy word allows,
Behold us waiting to be fed;
Bless the provision of thy house,
And satisfy thy poor with bread:

* Rev. v. 9. 12.
† Phil. i. 6.
‡ Rom. viii. 35—39.
§ Psal. cxv. 1.

Drawn by thine invitation, Lord,
Athirst and hungry we are come;
Now, from the fulness of thy word,
Feast us, and send us thankful home.

HYMN XC.

1 Now, Lord, inspire the preacher's heart,
And teach his tongue to speak;
Food to the hungry soul impart,
And cordials to the weak.

2 Furnish us all with light and powers
To walk in Wisdom's ways;
So shall the benefit be ours,
And thou shalt have the praise.

HYMN XCI.

1 Thy promise, Lord, and thy command,
Have brought us here to-day;
And now, we humbly waiting stand,
To hear what thou wilt say.*

2 Meet us, we pray, with words of peace,
And fill our hearts with love;
That from our follies we may cease,
And henceforth faithful prove.

HYMN XCII.

1 Hungry, and faint, and poor,
Behold us, Lord, again
Assembled at thy mercy's door,
Thy bounty to obtain.

2 Thy word invites us nigh,
Or we must starve indeed;
For we no money have to buy,
No righteousness to plead.

3 The food our spirits want
Thy hand alone can give;
Oh! hear the prayer of faith, and grant
That we may eat and live.

HYMN XCIII.

Psalm cvi. 4, 5.

1 Remember us, we pray thee, Lord,
With those who love thy gracious name,
And to our souls that good afford,
Thy promise has prepar'd for them.

2 To us thy great salvation show,
Give us a taste of love divine,
That we thy people's joy may know
And in their holy triumph join.

HYMN XCIV.

1 Not to Sinai's dreadful blaze,†
But to Zion's throne of grace,
By a way mark'd out with blood,
Sinners now approach to God.

2 Not to hear the fiery law,
But with humble joy to draw
Water, by that well supplied,‡
Jesus open'd when he died.

3 Lord, there are no streams but thine
Can assuage a thirst like mine:
'Tis a thirst thyself didst give,
Let me, therefore, drink and live.

HYMN XCV.

1 Often thy public means of grace,
Thy thirsty people's wat'ring place,
The archers have beset:*
Attack'd them in thy house of prayer,
To prison dragg'd, or to the bar,
When thus together met.

2 But we from such assaults are freed,
Can pray, and sing, and hear, and read,
And meet, and part, in peace:
May we our privileges prize,
In their improvement make us wise,
And bless us with increase.

3 Unless thy presence thou afford,
Unless thy blessing clothe the word,
In vain our liberty!
What would it profit to maintain
A name for life, should we remain
Formal and dead to thee?

AFTER SERMON.

HYMN XCVI.

Deut. xxxiii. 26. 29.

1 With Israel's God who can compare?
Or who like Israel happy are?
O people, saved by the Lord,
He is thy shield and great reward!

2 Upheld by everlasting arms,
Thou art secur'd from foes and harms:
In vain their plots, and false their boasts,
Our refuge is the Lord of hosts.

HYMN XCVII.

Habakkuk iii. 17, 18.

Jesus is mine! I'm now prepar'd
To meet with what I thought most hard.
Yes, let the winds of trouble blow,
And comforts melt away like snow;
No blasted trees or failing crops,
Can hinder my eternal hopes; [same;
Tho' creatures change, the Lord's the
Then let me triumph in his name.

HYMN XCVIII.

We seek a rest beyond the skies,
In everlasting day;
Through floods and flames the passage lies,
But Jesus guards the way:
The swelling flood, and raging flame,
Hear and obey his word;
Then let us triumph in his name,
Our Saviour is the Lord.

* Psal. lxxxv. 8. † Heb. xii. 18. 22. ‡ Isa. xii. 3.

* Judges v. 11.

HYMN XCIX.

Deut. xxxii. 9, 10.

1 The saints Emmanuel's portion are,
Redeem'd by price, reclaim'd by power;
His special choice, and tender care,
Owns them and guards them ev'ry hour.

2 He finds them in a barren land,
Beset with sins, and fears, and woes;
He leads and guides them by his hand,
And bears them safe from all their foes.

HYMN C.

Heb. xiii. 20—24.

1 Now may he who from the dead
Brought the Shepherd of the sheep,
Jesus Christ, our King and Head,
All our souls in safety keep!

2 May he teach us to fulfil
What is pleasing in his sight;
Perfect us in all his will,
And preserve us day and night!

3 To that dear Redeemer's praise,
Who the covenant seal'd with blood,
Let our hearts and voices raise
Loud thanksgivings to our God.

HYMN CI.

2 Cor. xiii. 14.

May the grace of Christ our Saviour,
And the Father's boundless love,
With the Holy Spirit's favour,
Rest upon us from above!
Thus may we abide in union
With each other and the Lord;
And possess, in sweet communion,
Joys which earth cannot afford.

HYMN CII.

The peace which God alone reveals,
And by his word of grace imparts,
Which only the believer feels,*
Direct and keep, and cheer your hearts:
And may the Holy Three in one,
The Father, Word, and Comforter,
Pour an abundant blessing down
On ev'ry soul assembled here!

HYMN CIII.

1 To thee our wants are known,
From thee are all our powers;
Accept what is thine own,
And pardon what is ours:
Our praises, Lord, and prayers receive,
And to thy word a blessing give.

2 O grant that each of us
Now met before thee here,
May meet together thus,
When thou and thine appear!
And follow thee to heaven our home,
E'en so, Amen! Lord Jesus, come!*

* Phil. iv. 7.

* Rev. v. 20.

GLORIA PATRI.

HYMN CIV.

1 The Father we adore,
And everlasting Son,
The Spirit of his love and power,
The glorious Three in One.

2 At the creation's birth
This song was sung on high,
Shall sound, through ev'ry age, on earth,
And through eternity.

HYMN CV.

1 Father of angels and of men,
Saviour, who hast us bought,
Spirit, by whom we 're born again,
And sanctified and taught!

2 Thy glory, holy Three in One,
Thy people's song shall be;
Long as the wheels of time shall run,
And to eternity.

HYMN CVI.

1 Glory to God the Father's name,
To Jesus, who for sinners died;
The Holy Spirit claims the same,
By whom our souls are sanctified.

2 Thy praise was sung, when time began,
By angels, through the starry spheres;
And shall, as now, be sung by man,
Through vast eternity's long years.

HYMN CVII.

Ye saints on earth, ascribe, with heaven's high host,
Glory and honour to the One in Three:
To God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
As was, and is, and evermore shall be.

POEMS.

THE KITE; OR, PRIDE MUST HAVE A FALL.

My waking dreams are best conceal'd,
Much folly, little good, they yield;
But now and then I gain, when sleeping,
A friendly hint that 's worth the keeping.
Lately I dreamt of one who cried,
"Beware of self, beware of pride;
When you are prone to build a Babel,
Recall to mind this little fable."

Once on a time a paper kite
Was mounted to a wond'rous height,
Where, giddy with its elevation,
It thus express'd self-admiration:
"See how yon crowds of gazing people
Admire my flight above the steeple:
How would they wonder if they knew
All that a kite like me can do!
Were I but free, I 'd take a flight,
And pierce the clouds beyond their sight;
But, ah! like a poor pris'ner bound,
My string confines me near the ground:
I 'd brave the eagle's towering wing,
Might I but fly without a string."
It tugg'd and pull'd, while thus it spoke,
To break the string:—at last it broke.
Depriv'd at once of all its stay,
In vain it tried to soar away;
Unable its own weight to bear,
It flutter'd downward through the air;
Unable its own course to guide,
The winds soon plung'd it in the tide.
Ah! foolish kite, thou hadst no wing,
How couldst thou fly without a string?
My heart replied, "O Lord, I see
How much this kite resembles me!
Forgetful that by thee I stand,
Impatient of thy ruling hand;
How oft I 've wish'd to break the lines
Thy wisdom for my lot assigns?
How oft indulg'd a vain desire,
For something more or something higher?
And, but for grace and love divine,
A fall thus dreadful had been mine."

A THOUGHT ON THE SEA-SHORE.

In ev'ry object here I see
Something, O Lord, that leads to thee:
Firm as the rocks thy promise stands,
Thy mercies countless as the sands,
Thy love a sea immensely wide,
Thy grace an ever-flowing tide.
In ev'ry object here I see
Something, my heart, that points at thee:
Hard as the rocks that bound the strand,
Unfruitful as the barren sand,
Deep and deceitful as the ocean,
And, like the tide, in constant motion.

THE SPIDER AND THE TOAD

Some author (no great matter who,
Provided what he says be true)
Relates he saw, with hostile rage,
A spider and a toad engage;
For though with poison both are stor'd,
Each by the other is abhorr'd:
It seems as if their common venom
Provok'd an enmity between 'em.
Implacable, malicious, cruel,
Like modern hero in a duel,
The spider darted on his foe,
Infixing death at ev'ry blow.
The toad, by ready instinct taught,
An antidote, when wounded, sought,
From the herb plantain, growing near,
Well-known to toads, its virtues rare
The spider's poison to repel;
It cropp'd the leaf and soon was well.
This remedy it often tried,
And all the spider's rage defied.
The person who the contest viewed,
While yet the battle doubtful stood,
Remov'd the healing plant away,
And thus the spider gain'd the day;
For when the toad returned once more,
Wounded, as it had done before,
To seek relief, and found it not,
It swell'd and died upon the spot.
In ev'ry circumstance but one
(Could that hold too, I were undone!)
No glass can represent my face
More justly than this tale my case.
The toad 's an emblem of my heart,
And Satan acts the spider's part.
Envenom'd by his poison, I
Am often at the point to die;
But he who hung upon the tree,
From guilt and woe to set me free,
Is like the plantain leaf to me.

To him my wounded soul repairs,
He knows my pain and hears my prayers;
From him I virtue draw by faith,
Which saves me from the jaws of death:
From him fresh life and strength I gain,
And Satan spends his rage in vain.
No secret arts or open force
Can rob me of this sure resource:
Though banish'd to some distant land,
My med'cine would be still at hand;
Though foolish men its worth deny,
Experience gives them all the lie;
Though Deists and Socinians join,
Jesus still lives, and still is mine.

'Tis here the happy difference lies,
My Saviour reigns above the skies,
Yet to my soul is always near,
For he is God and everywhere.
His blood a sovereign balm is found
For ev'ry grief and ev'ry wound;
And sooner all the hills shall flee
And hide themselves beneath the sea,
Or ocean, starting from its bed,
Rush o'er the cloud-topt mountains' head,
The sun, exhausted of its light,
Become the source of endless night,
And ruin spread from pole to pole,
Than Jesus fail the tempted soul

MESSIAH:

OR

FIFTY EXPOSITORY DISCOURSES

ON THE

SERIES OF SCRIPTURAL PASSAGES WHICH FORM THE SUBJECT OF HANDEL'S CELEBRATED ORATORIO OF THAT NAME.

Preached in the Years 1784 *and* 1785, *in the Parish Church of St. Mary Woolnoth, Lombard Street, London*

—— Ah!
Tantamne rem, tam negligenter, agere!—TER.

Oh, that they were wise, that they understood this!—DEUT. xxxii. 29.

TO THE PARISHIONERS OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH, AND ST. MARY WOOLCHURCH HAW, LONDON,

These Sermons on the Messiah, are affectionately inscribed by the Author, to remain as a testimony of his respect for their persons, and his solicitude for their welfare, when his present relation to them, as their minister, shall be dissolved.

PREFACE.

THE following Sermons, as to the substance (for most of them are considerably abridged,) were preached to a public and numerous assembly; and therefore an accurate and logical discussion of the several subjects was not aimed at. They are rather popular discourses, in which the author, though he wished not to treat the politer part of his auditory with disrespect, thought it likewise his duty so to adapt his manner to the occasion, as to be intelligible to persons of weak capacities and in the lower ranks of life. He conceives himself to be a debtor to every class of his hearers, and that he ought to endeavour to please all men, with a view to their edification; but, farther than this, not to be greatly affected, either by their approbation or by their censure.

Many of the subjects are so nearly coincident, that repetitions could not be always avoided, without the appearance of affectation. Besides, as it may be expected that, in a large congregation, there are always some persons present for the first time,—with respect to these, an observation may be new, though perhaps the more stated hearers may recollect its having been mentioned before. For a similar reason, such repetitions are not improper in print. Many persons read part of a book, who may not have opportunity or inclination to read the whole. Should any one, by opening these sermons at a venture, meet with a passage

which, by a divine blessing may either awaken a careless, or heal a wounded spirit, that passage will be exactly in the right page, even though the purport of it should be expressed in several other places. Farther, since we do not always so much stand in need of new information, as to have what we already know more effectually impressed upon the mind, there are truths which can scarcely be inculcated too often, at least until the design for which they were mentioned once be effectually answered. Thus, when the strokes of a hammer are often repeated, not one of them can be deemed superfluous; the last, which drives the nail to the head, being no less necessary than any of those which preceded it.

From those readers, whose habits of thinking on religious subjects are formed by a close attachment to particular systems of divinity, the Author requests a candid construction of what he advances, if he ventures in some instances to deviate a little from the more beaten track. If he is sometimes constrained to differ from the judgment of wise and good men, who have deserved well of the church of God, he would do it with modesty: far from depreciating their labours, he would be thankful for the benefit which he hopes he has received from them. It is a great satisfaction to him, that in all doctrinal points of primary importance, his views are confirmed by the suffrage of writers and ministers eminent for genuine piety and sound learning, who assisted him in his early inquiries after truth, and at whose feet he is still willing to sit. Yet, remembering that he is authorised and commanded to call no man Master, so as to yield an implicit and unqualified submission to human teachers, while he gladly borrows every help he can from others, he ventures likewise to think for himself. His leading sentiments concerning the grand peculiarities of the gospel were formed many years since, when he was in a state of almost entire seclusion from society,—when he had scarcely any religious book but the Bible within his reach, and had no knowledge, either of the various names, parties, and opinions by which christians were distinguished and divided, or the controversies which subsisted among them. He is not conscious that any material difference has taken place in his sentiments since he first became acquainted with the religious world; but, after a long course of experience and observation, he seems to possess them in a different manner. The difficulties which for a season perplexed him on some points, are either removed or considerably abated. On the other hand, he now perceives difficulties that constrain him to lay his hand upon his mouth, in subjects which once appeared to him obvious and plain. Thus, if he mistakes not himself, he is less troubled with scepticism, and at the same time less disposed to be dogmatical, than he formerly was. He feels himself unable to draw the line with precision between those essential points which ought to be earnestly contended for (in a spirit of meekness,) as for the faith once delivered to the saints, and certain secondary positions, concerning which good men may safely differ; and wherein, perhaps, we cannot reasonably expect them to be unanimous during the present state of imperfection. But if the exact boundary cannot be marked with certainty, he thinks it both desirable and possible to avoid the extremes into which men of warm tempers have often been led.

Not that the Author can be an advocate for that indifference to truth, which, under the specious semblance of moderation and candour, offers a comprehension, from which none are excluded but those who profess and aim to worship God in the spirit, to rejoice in Christ Jesus, and to renounce all confidence in the flesh. Moderation is a christian grace; it differs much from that tame, unfeeling neutrality between truth and error which is so prevalent in the present day. As the different rays of light, which, when separated by a prism, exhibit the various colours of the rainbow, form, in their combination, a perfect and resplendent white, in which every colour is incorporated, so, if the graces of the Holy Spirit were complete in us, the result of their combined effect would be a truly candid, moderate, and liberal spirit towards our brethren. The christian, especially he who is advanced and established in the life of faith, has a fervent zeal for God, for the honour of his name, his law, and his gospel. The honest warmth which he feels

when such a law is broken, such a gospel is despised, and when the great and glorious name of the Lord his God is profaned, would, by the occasion of his infirmities, often degenerate into anger or contempt towards those who oppose themselves, if he was under the influence of zeal only. But his zeal is blended with benevolence and humility; it is softened by a conseiousness of his own frailty and fallibility. He is aware that his knowledge is very limited in itself, and very faint in its efficacy; that his attainments are weak and few compared with his deficiencies; that his gratitude is very disproportionate to his obligations, and his obedience unspeakably short of conformity to his preseribed rule; that he has nothing but what he has received, and has received nothing but what, in a greater or less degree, he has misapplied and misimproved. He is therefore a debtor to the mercy of God, and lives upon his multiplied forgiveness; and he makes the gracious conduct of the Lord towards himself a pattern for his own conduct towards his fellow-creatures. He cannot boast, nor is he forward to censure. He considers himself, lest he also be tempted, (Gal. vi. 1;) and thus he learns tenderness and compassion to others, and to bear patiently with those mistakes, prejudices, and prepossessions in them, which once belonged to his own character, and from which, as yet, he is but imperfectly freed. But then, the same considerations which inspire him with meekness and gentleness towards those who oppose the truth, strengthen his regard for the truth itself, and his conviction of its importance. For the sake of peace, which he loves and cultivates, he accommodates himself, as far as he lawfully can, to the weakness and misapprehensions of those who mean well, though he is thereby exposed to the censure of bigots of all parties, who deem him flexible and wavering, like a reed shaken with the wind. But there are other points nearly connected with the honour of God, and essential to the life of faith, which are the foundations of his hope and the sources of his joy. For his firm attachment to these, he is content to be treated as a bigot himself; for here he is immoveable as an iron pillar; nor can either the fear or the favour of man prevail on him to give place, no not for an hour, Gal. ii. 5. Here his judgment is fixed, and he expresses it in simple and unequivocal language, so as not to leave either friends or enemies in suspense concerning the side he has chosen, or the cause which is nearest to his heart.

The minister who possesses a candour thus enlightened, and thus qualified, will neither degrade himself to be the instrument, nor aspire to be the head of a party. He will not servilely tread in the paths prescribed him by men, however respectable. He will not multiply contentions, in defence either of the shibboleths of others, or of any nostrum of his own, under a pretence that he is pleading for the cause of God and truth. His attention will not be restrained to the credit or interest of any detached denomination of christians, but extended to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. On the other hand, knowing that the gospel is the wisdom and power of God, and the only possible mean by which fallen man can obtain either peace or rectitude, he most cordially embraces and avows it. Far from being ashamed of it, he esteems it his glory. He preaches Christ Jesus the Lord, and him crucified. He dares not sophisticate (2 Cor. iv. 2,) disguise, or soften the great doctrines of the grace of God, to render them more palatable to the depraved taste of the times. He disdains the thought; and he will no more encounter the prejudices, and corrupt maxims, and practices of the world with any weapon but the truth as it is in Jesus (Eph. iv. 21,) than he would venture to fight an enraged enemy with a wooden sword.

Such is the disposition which the Author wishes for himself, and which he would endeavour to cultivate in others. He hopes that nothing of a contrary tendency will be found in the volumes* now presented to the public. Messiah, the great subject of the Oratorio, is the leading and principal subject of every sermon. His person, grace, and glory; his matchless love to sinners; his humiliation, sufferings, and death; his ability and willingness to save to the uttermost; his king-

* These Sermons were originally printed in two volumes

dom, and the present and future happiness of his willing people are severally considered, according to the order suggested by the series of texts. Nearly connected with these topics are the doctrines of the fall and depravity of man, the agency of the Holy Spirit, and the nature and necessity of regeneration, and of that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. On these subjects the Author is not afraid of contradiction from those who are taught of God.

With respect to some other points which incidentally occur, he has endeavoured so to treat them as to avoid administering fuel to the flame of angry controversy. He is persuaded himself, and shall be happy to persuade his readers, that the remaining differences of opinion among those who truly understand and cordially believe the declarations of scripture on the preceding articles, are neither so wide nor so important as they have been sometimes represented. Many of these differences are nearly verbal, and would cease, if due allowance was made for the imperfection of human language, and the effects of an accustomed phraseology, which often lead people to affix different ideas to the same expressions, or to express the same ideas in different words. And if, in some things, we cannot exactly agree, since we confess that we are all weak and fallible, mutual patience and forbearance would be equally becoming the acknowledgments we make, and the gospel which we profess. We should thereby act in character, as the followers of Him who was compassionate to the infirmities and mistakes of his disciples, and taught them not every thing at once, but gradually, as they were able to bear.

The Author ought not to be very solicitous upon his own account, what reception his performance may meet with. The fashion of this world is passing away. The voice, both of applause and of censure, will soon be stifled in the dust. It is therefore but a small thing to be judged of man's judgment, 1 Cor. iv. 3. But conscious of the vast importance of the subject which he thus puts into the reader's hands, he cannot take leave of him without earnestly entreating his serious attention. The one principle which he assumes for granted, and which he is certain cannot be disproved, is, That the Bible is a revelation from God. By this standard he is willing that whatever he has advanced may be tried. If the Bible be true, we must all give an account, each one of himself, to the great and final Judge. That, when we shall appear before his awful tribunal, we may be found at his right hand, accepted in the Beloved, is the Author's fervent prayer, both for his readers and for himself.

London, 15*th April*, 1786.

MESSIAH, &c.

SERMON I.

THE CONSOLATION.

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received at the Lord's hand double for all her sins.—Isaiah xl. 1, 2.

The particulars of the great mystery of godliness, as enumerated by the apostle Paul, constitute the grand and inexhaustible theme of the gospel ministry: "God manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory," 1 Tim. iii. 16. It is my wish and purpose to know nothing among you but this subject; to preach nothing to you but what has a real connexion with the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and him crucified, and with the causes and effects of his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. But a regard to the satisfaction and advantage of my stated hearers, has often made me desirous of adopting some plan, which might lead me to exhibit the principal outlines of the Saviour's character and mediation in a regular series of discourses, so as to form, if not a picture, at least a slight sketch, of those features of his glory and of his grace which endear him to the hearts of his people. Such a plan has lately, and rather unexpectedly, occurred to me. Conversation in almost every company, for some time past, has much turned upon the commemoration of Handel; the grand musical entertainments, and particularly his Oratorio of the Messiah, which have been repeatedly performed on that occasion in Westminster Abbey. If it could be reasonably hoped, that the performers and the company assembled to hear the music, or the greater part, or even a considerable part of them, were capable of entering into the spirit of the subject, I will readily allow that the Messiah, executed in so masterly a manner, by persons whose hearts, as well as their voices and instruments, were tuned to the Redeemer's praise; accompanied with the grateful emotions of an audience duly affected with a sense of their obligations to his love; might afford one of the highest and noblest gratifications of which we are capable in the present life. But they who love the Redeemer, and therefore delight to join in his praise, if they did not find it convenient, or think it expedient, to hear the Messiah at Westminster, may comfort themselves with the thought, that, in a little time, they shall be still more abundantly gratified. Ere long death shall rend the vail which hides eternal things from their view, and introduce them to that unceasing song and universal chorus, which are even now performing before the throne of God and the Lamb. Till then, I apprehend, that true christians, without the assistance of either vocal or instrumental music, may find greater pleasure in a humble contemplation on the words of the Messiah, than they can derive from the utmost efforts of musical genius. This, therefore, is the plan I spoke of. I mean to lead your meditations to the language of the Oratorio, and to consider in their order (if the Lord, on whom our breath depends, shall be pleased to afford life, ability, and opportunity) the several sublime and interesting passages of scripture which are the basis of that admired composition.

If he shall condescend to smile upon the attempt, pleasure and profit will go hand in hand. There is no harmony to a heaven-born soul like that which is the result of the combination and coincidence of all the divine attributes and perfections, manifested in the work of redemption; mercy and truth meeting together, inflexible righteousness corresponding with the peace of offenders, God glorious, and sinners saved. There is no melody upon earth to be compared with the voice of the blood of Jesus, speaking peace to a guilty conscience, or with the voice of the Holy Spirit, applying the promises to the heart, and sweetly inspiring a temper of confidence and adoption. These are joys which the world can neither give nor take away,

which never pall upon the mind by continuance or repetition; the sense of them is always new, the recollection of them is always pleasant. Nor do they only satisfy, but sanctify the soul. They strengthen faith, animate hope, add fervency to love, and both dispose and enable the christian to run in all the paths of holy obedience with an enlarged heart.

The Messiah of Handel consists of three parts. The first contains prophecies of his advent, and the happy consequences, together with the angel's message to the shepherds, informing them of his birth, as related by St. Luke. The second part describes his passion, death, resurrection, and ascension; his taking possession of his kingdom of glory, the commencement of his kingdom of grace upon earth, and the certain disappointment and ruin of all who persist in opposition to his will. The third part expresses the blessed fruits and consummation of his undertaking, in the deliverance of his people from sin, sorrow, and death, and in making them finally victorious over all their enemies. The triumphant song of the redeemed, to the praise of the Lamb, who bought them with his own blood, closes the whole. The arrangement or series of these passages is so judiciously disposed, so well connected, and so fully comprehends all the principal truths of the gospel, that I shall not attempt either to alter or to enlarge it. The exordium or introduction, which I have read to you from the prophecy of Isaiah, is very happily chosen.

If, as some eminent commentators suppose, the prophet had any reference, in this passage, to the return of Israel from Babylon into their own land, his principal object was undoubtedly of much greater importance. Indeed, their deliverance from captivity, and their state afterwards as a nation, do not appear to correspond with the magnificent images employed in the following verses; for though they rebuilt their city and temple, they met with many insults and much opposition, and continued to be a tributary and dependent people. I shall therefore wave the consideration of this sense.

The eye of the prophet's mind seems to be chiefly fixed upon one august personage, who was approaching to enlighten and bless a miserable world; and before he describes the circumstances of his appearance, he is directed to comfort the mourners in Zion, with an assurance, that this great event would fully compensate them for all their sorrows. The state of Jerusalem, the representative name of the people of God, was very low in Isaiah's time. The people, who, in the days of Solomon, were attached to the service of God, honoured with signal tokens of his presence and favour, and raised to the highest pitch of temporal prosperity, were now degenerated; the gold was become dim, and the fine gold changed. Iniquity abounded, judgments were impending, yet insensibility and security prevailed, and the words of many were stout against the Lord. But there were a few who feared the Lord, whose eyes affected their hearts, and who mourned for the evils which they could not prevent. These, and these only, were, in strictness of speech, the people of the Lord, and to these the message of comfort is addressed. Speak to Jerusalem comfortably, speak *to her heart* (as the Hebrew word is,) to her very case, and tell her that there is a balm for all her wounds, a cordial for all her griefs, in this one consideration, Messiah is at hand. In the prophetic style, things future are described as present, and that which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken of as sure to take place, is considered as already done. Thus the prophet, "rapt into future times," contemplates the manifestation of Messiah, the accomplishment of his great undertaking, and all the happy consequences of his obedience unto death for men, as though he stood upon the spot, and with John, the harbinger of our Lord (whose appearance he immediately describes,) was pointing with his finger to the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.

This comfortable message consists of two parts. First, the removal of evil,—"Her warfare is accomplished, her iniquity is pardoned." Secondly, a promise of good, more than equivalent to all her afflictions,—"She hath received at the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

I. Two ideas are included in the original term, translated "warfare:"

1. A state of service, connected with hardship, like that of the military life, Numb. i. 3.

2. An appointed time, as it is rendered in Job vii. 1, and xiv. 14.

These ideas equally apply to the Mosaic dispensation. The spirit of that institution was comparatively a spirit of bondage, distance, and fear; and the state of the church, while under the law, is resembled by the apostle to that of a minor, who, though he be an heir, is under tutors and governors, and differeth but little from a servant, until the time appointed of the Father, Gal. iv. 1—4. The ceremonial law, with respect to its inefficacy, is styled weak, and with respect to the long train of its multiplied, expensive, difficult, and repeated appointments, a yoke and burden. But it was only for a prescribed time. The gospel was designed to supersede it, and to introduce a state of life, power, liberty, and confidence. The blackness and darkness, the fire and tempest, and other circumstances of terror attendant on the promulgation of the law at Mount Sinai, (Heb. xii. 18—22,) which not only struck the people with dismay, but caused even Moses himself to say, "I exceedingly fear and quake," were expressive of its design; which was not

to lead the people of Israel to expect peace and hope from their best obedience to that covenant, but rather to convince them of the necessity of a better covenant, established upon better promises, and to direct their hopes to Messiah, who was prefigured by all their sacrifices, and who, in the fulness of time, was to make a complete atonement for sin, by the sacrifice of himself. Then their legal figurative constitution would cease, the shadows give place to the substance, and the true worshippers of God would be instructed, enabled, and encouraged, to worship him in spirit and in truth; no more as servants, but in the temper of adoption, as the children of God, by faith in the Son of his love.

There is a considerable analogy to this difference between the law and the gospel, as contradistinguished from each other, in the previous distress of a sinner, when he is made sensible of his guilt and danger as a transgressor of the law of God, and the subsequent peace which he obtains by believing the gospel. The good seed of the word of grace can only take root and flourish in a soil duly prepared. And this preparation of the heart, (Prov. xvi. 1,) without which, all that is read or heard concerning Messiah produces no permanent good effect, is wholly from the Lord. The first good work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart of fallen man, is to convince of sin, John xvi. 9. He gives some due impressions of the majesty and holiness of the God with whom we have to do, of our dependence upon him, of our obligations to him as our Creator, Lawgiver, and Benefactor; then we begin to form our estimate of duty, of sin, and its desert, not from the prevalent maxims and judgment of mankind around us, but from the unerring standard of scripture. Thence new and painful apprehensions arise—the lofty looks of man are humbled, his haughtiness is brought low, his mouth stopped, or only opened to confess his guilt and vileness, and to cry for mercy. He now feels himself under the law; it condemns him, and he cannot reply; it commands him, and he cannot obey. He has neither righteousness nor strength, and must sink into despair, were it not that he is now qualified to hearken to the gospel with other ears, and to read the scriptures with other eyes (if I may so speak,) than he once did. He now knows he is sick, and therefore knows his need of a physician. This state of anxiety, conflict, and fear, which keeps comfort from his heart, and perhaps slumber from his eyes, is often of long continuance. There is no common standard whereby to determine either the degree or the duration. Both differ in different persons; and as the body and the mind have a strong and reciprocal influence upon each other, it is probable the difference observable in such cases may in part depend upon constitutional causes. However, the time is a prescribed time, and though not subject to any rules or reasonings of ours, is limited and regulated by the wisdom of God. He wounds and he heals, in his own appointed moment. None that continue waiting upon him, and seeking salvation, in the means which he has directed, shall be finally disappointed. Sooner or later he gives them, according to his promise, beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, Isa. lxi. 3. This warfare is accomplished, when they rightly understand and cordially believe the following clause:

Her iniquity is pardoned.—Though the sacrifices under the law had an immediate and direct effect to restore the offender, for whom they were offered, to the privileges pertaining to the people of Israel, considered as a nation or commonwealth, they could not, of themselves, cleanse the conscience from guilt. It is a dictate of right reason, no less than of revelation, that it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin, Heb. x. 4. For this purpose, the blood of Christ had a retrospective efficacy, and was the only ground of consolation for a convinced sinner from the beginning of the world. He was proposed to our first parents as the seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent's head, Gen. iii. 15. In this seed Abraham believed, and was justified, and all of every age who were justified, were partakers of Abraham's faith. Therefore the apostle teaches us, that when God set him forth as a propitiation, through faith in his blood, he declared his righteousness in the remission of sins that were past, Rom. iii. 25. For though we may suppose God would have declared his mercy in forgiving sin upon any terms, no consideration but the death of his Son could have exhibited his righteousness; that is, his holiness, justice, and truth, in the pardon of sin. True penitents and believers were pardoned and saved under the law, but not by the law. Their faith looked through all the legal institutions to him who was represented and typified by them. But the types which revealed him, in a sense concealed him likewise; so that, though Abraham saw his day, and rejoiced, and a succession of the servants of God foresaw his glory and his sufferings, and spake of him; yet, in general, the church of the Old Testament rather desired and longed for, than actually possessed, that fulness of light and knowledge concerning the person, offices, love, and victory of Messiah, which is the privilege of those who enjoy and believe the gospel, Heb. xi. 39, 40. Yet great discoveries of these things were vouchsafed to some of the prophets, particularly to Isaiah, who, on account of the clearness of his views of the Redeemer and his kingdom, has been sometimes styled the fifth evangelist. The most evangelical part of his prophecy, or at least that part in which he

prosecutes the subject with the least interruption, begins with this chapter and with this verse. And he proposes it for the comfort of the mourners in Zion in his day. We know that the Son of God, of whom Moses and the prophets spake, is actually come; (1 John v. 20;) that the atonement for sin is made, the ransom for sinners paid and accepted. Now the shadows are past, the veil removed, the night is ended, the dawn, the day, is arrived, yea the Sun of righteousness is arisen, with healing in his wings, Mal. iv. 2. God is reconciled in his Son, and the ministers of the gospel are now authorised to preach comfort to all who mourn under a sense of sin; to tell them, all manner of sin is forgiven, for the Redeemer's sake, and that the iniquity of those who believe in him is freely and adundantly pardoned.

II. Though the last clause of the verse does not belong to the passage, as selected for the Oratorio, it is so closely connected with the subject, that I am not willing to omit it. "She has received at the Lord's hand double for all her sin." The meaning here cannot be, that her afflictions had already been more and greater, than her sins had deserved. The just desert of sin cannot be received in the present life, for the wages of sin is death and the curse of the law, or, in the apostle's words, everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power, 2 Thess. i. 9. Therefore a living man can have no reason to complain under the heaviest sufferings. If we acknowledge ourselves to be sinners, we have likewise cause to acknowledge, that he hath not dealt with us according to our iniquities. Nor can the words be so applied to Messiah, as to intimate, that even his sufferings were more than necessary, or greater than the exigence of the case required. The efficacy of his atonement is indeed greater than the actual application, and sufficient to save the whole race of mankind if they truly believe in the Son of God. We read, that he groaned and bled upon the cross, till he could say, It is finished, but no longer. It becomes us to refer to infinite wisdom the reasons why his sufferings were prolonged for such a precise time; but I think we may take it for granted, that they did not endure an hour or a minute longer than was strictly necessary. The expression seems to be elliptical, and I apprehend the true sense is, that Jerusalem should receive blessings, double, much greater than all the afflictions which sin had brought upon her; and in general to us, to every believing sinner, that the blessings of the gospel are an unspeakably great compensation, and over-balance, for all afflictions of every kind with which we have been, or can be exercised. Afflictions are the fruit of sin, and because our sins have been many, our afflictions may be many. "But where sin has abounded, grace has much more abounded," Rom. v. 20.

Before our Lord healed the paralytic man who was brought to him, he said, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee," Mark ii. 5. His outward malady rendered him an object of compassion to those who brought him: but he appears to have been sensible of an inward malady, which only Jesus could discern, or pity, or relieve. I doubt not but his conscience was burdened with guilt. An assurance therefore that his sins were forgiven, was sufficient to make him be of good cheer, whether his palsy were removed or not. To this purpose the psalmist speaks absolutely and without exception. "Blessed is the man, (however circumstanced,) whose transgression is forgiven, whose iniquity is covered," Psalm xxxii. 1. Though he be poor, afflicted, diseased, neglected or despised, if the Lord imputeth not his iniquity to him, he is a blessed man. There is no situation in human life so deplorable, but a sense of the pardoning love of God can support and comfort the sufferer under it, compose his spirit, yea, make him exceedingly joyful in all his tribulations. For he who feels the power of the blood of Jesus cleansing his conscience from guilt, and giving him access by faith to the throne of grace, with liberty to say, Abba, Father; he knows that all his trials are under the direction of wisdom and love, are all working together for his good, and that the heaviest of them are light, and the longest momentary, in comparison of that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory which is reserved for him in a better world, 2 Cor. iv. 16, 17. Even at present in the midst of his sufferings, having communion with God, and a gracious submission to his will, he possesses a peace that passeth understanding, and which the world can neither give nor take away.

I shall close this preliminary discourse with a few observations by way of improvement.

1. How justly may we adopt the prophet's words, "Who is a God like unto thee!" Micah vii. 18. Behold and admire his goodness! Infinitely happy and glorious in himself, he has provided for the comfort of those who were rebels against his government, and transgressors of his holy law. What was degenerate Israel, and what are we, that he should thus prevent us with his mercy, remember us in our low estate, and redeem us from misery, in such a way, and at such a price! Salvation is wholly of grace; (Ephes. ii. 5;) not only undeserved, but undesired by us, till he is pleased to awaken us to a sense of our need of it. And then we find every thing prepared that our wants require, or our wishes can conceive; yea, that he has done exceedingly beyond what we could either ask or think. Salvation is wholly of the Lord,

(Psalm iii. 8,) and bears those signatures of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, which distinguish all his works from the puny imitations of men. It is every way worthy of himself; a great, a free, a full, a sure salvation. It is great,—whether we consider the objects, miserable and hell-deserving sinners; the end, the restoration of such alienated creatures to his image and favour, to immortal life and happiness; or the means, the incarnation, humiliation, sufferings and death of his beloved Son. It is free,—without exception of persons or cases, without any conditions or qualifications, but such as he himself performs in them, and bestows upon them. It is full,—including every desirable blessing; pardon, peace, adoption, protection and guidance through this world, and in the world to come eternal life and happiness, in the unclouded, uninterrupted enjoyment of the favour and love of God, with the perfect and perpetual exclusion of every evil.

2. When the Lord God, who knows the human heart, would speak comfort to it, he proposes one object, and only one, as the necessary and all-sufficient source of consolation. This is Messiah. Jesus in his person and offices, known and received by faith, affords a balm for every wound, a cordial for every care. If we admit that they who live in the spirit of the world, can make a poor shift to amuse themselves, and be tolerably satisfied in a state of prosperity, while every thing goes on according to their wish; while we make this concession (which however is more than we need allow them, for we know that no state of life is free from anxiety, disappointment, weariness, and disgust,) yet we must consider them as objects of compassion. It is a proof of the weakness and disorder of their minds, that they are capable of being satisfied with such trifles. Thus if a lunatic conceives his cell to be a palace, that his chains are ornaments of gold, if he calls a wreath of his straw a crown, puts it on his head, and affects the language of majesty—we do not suppose the poor creature to be happy, because he tells us that he is so; but we rather consider his complacence in his situation, as an effect and proof of his malady. We pity him, and, if we were able, would gladly restore him to his senses, though we know a cure would immediately put an end to his pleasing delusions. But, I say, supposing or admitting the world could make its votaries happy in a state of prosperity, it will, it must, leave them without resource in the day of trouble. And they are to be pitied indeed, who, when their gourds are withered, when the desire of their eyes is taken from them with a stroke, or the evil which they most feared touches them, or when death looks them closely in the face, have no acquaintance with God, no access to the throne of grace, but being without Christ, are without a solid hope of good hereafter, though they are forced to feel the vanity and inconstancy of every thing here. But they who know Messiah, who believe in him, and partake of his spirit, cannot be comfortless. They recollect what he suffered for them, they know that every circumstance and event of life is under his direction, and designed to work for their good: that though they sow in tears, they shall soon reap in joy: and therefore they possess their souls in patience, and are cheerful, yea comfortable, under those trying dispensations of providence, which when they affect the lovers of pleasure, too often either excite in them a spirit of presumptuous murmuring against the will of God; or sink them into despondency, and all the melancholy train of evils attendant on those who languish and pine away under that depression of spirits, emphatically styled a broken heart.

3. To be capable of the comfort my text proposes, the mind must be in a suitable disposition. A free pardon is a comfort to a malefactor, but it implies guilt; and therefore they who have no apprehension that they have broken the laws, would be rather offended than comforted, by an offer of pardon. This is one principal cause of that neglect, yea contempt, which the gospel of the grace of God meets with from the world. If we could suppose that a company of people who were all trembling under an apprehension of his displeasure, constrained to confess the justice of the sentence, but not as yet informed of any way to escape, were to hear this message for the first time, and to be fully assured of its truth and authority, they would receive it as life from the dead. But it is to be feared, that for want of knowing themselves, and their real state in the sight of him with whom they have to do, many persons, who have received pleasure from the music of the Messiah, have neither found, nor expected, nor desired to find, any comfort from the words.

SERMON II.

THE HARBINGER.

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. —Isaiah xl. 3—5.

THE general style of the prophecies is poetical. The inimitable simplicity which characterizes every part of divine revelation,

is diversified according to the nature of the subject; and the magnificence and variety of imagery which constitute the life and spirit of poetry, evidently distinguish the style of the Psalms, or Isaiah, and the other poetical books, from that of the historical, even in the common versions. The various rules and properties of Hebrew poetry are not, at this distance of time, certainly known. But the present Bishop of London,* in his elegant and instructive lectures on the subject, and in the discourse prefixed to his translation of Isaiah, has fully demonstrated one property. It usually consists either of parallel, or contrasted sentences. The parallel expressions (excepting in the book of Proverbs) are most prevalent. In these the same thought, for substance, expressed in the first member, is repeated, with some difference of phrase, in the following; which, if it enlarges or confirms the import of what went before, seldom varies the idea. Almost any passage I first cast my eye upon, will sufficiently explain my meaning. For instance, in the fifty-ninth chapter of Isaiah:

Ver. 1. Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save;
Neither is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear.
9. Therefore is judgment far from us,
Neither doth justice overtake us:
We wait for light, but behold obscurity;
For brightness, but we walk in darkness.

So in chap. lv. 2.

Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread?
And your labour for that which satisfieth not?
Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good,
And let your soul delight itself in fatness.

So likewise in the second Psalm:

Ver. 4. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh;
The Lord shall have them in derision.
5. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath,
And vex them in his sore displeasure.

These specimens may suffice for my present purpose. The knowledge of this peculiarity of the poetical idiom, may often save us the trouble of inquiring minutely into the meaning of every single word, when one plain and comprehensive sense arises from a view of the whole passage taken together. This observation applies to the first of the verses in my text. Though it be true that John the Baptist lived for a season retired and unnoticed in a wilderness, and began to preach in the wilderness of Judea, the expression, *The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness*, does not merely foretell that circumstance. The verse consists of two parallels. The prophet, "rapt into future times," hears a voice proclaiming the approach of Messiah, and this is the majestic language:

In the wilderness prepare ye the way of the Lord,
Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

The wilderness and the desert are the same here, as likewise in chap. xxxv. 1, where the happy, the sudden, the unexpected effects of his appearance are described:—

The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them;
And the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.

Now, to see, by the eye of faith, the glory of the Redeemer in his appearance; to see power divine preparing the way before him; to enter into the gracious and wonderful design of his salvation; to acknowledge, admire, and adore him as the Lord, and humbly to claim him as our God, must afford a pleasure very different from that which the most excellent music, however well adapted to the words, can possibly give. The latter may be relished by a worldly mind; the former is appropriate, and can only be enjoyed by those who are taught of God.

When the eastern monarchs travelled, harbingers went before to give notice that the King was upon the road, and likewise proper persons to prepare his way and to remove obstacles. Some of them (if we may depend upon history,) in the affectation of displaying their pomp and power, effected extraordinary things upon such occasions. For man, though vain, would appear wise; though a sinful worm, he would fain be accounted great. We read of their having actually filled up valleys, and levelled hills, to make a commodious road, for themselves or their armies, through places otherwise impassable. The prophet thus illustrates great things by small, and accommodates the language and usages of men to divine truth. Messiah is about to visit a wilderness world, and those parts of which he blesses with his presence, shall become the garden of the Lord. Till then it is all desolate, rocky, and wild. But his way shall be prepared. Mountainous difficulties shall sink down before him into plains. In defiance of all obstacles, his glory shall be revealed in the wilderness, and all flesh shall see it, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

The leading ideas respecting Messiah's appearance suggested by this sublime representation, are,

I. The state of the world at his coming—"A wilderness."

II. The preparation of his way—"Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low."

* Dr. Lowth.

III. The manner and effects of his manifestation—"And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it."

I. The word "wilderness," I suppose, generally excites the idea of an intricate, solitary, uncultivated, dangerous place. Such is the description Jeremiah gives of that wilderness through which the Lord led Israel, when he had delivered them from Egypt: "A land of deserts and of pits, a land of drought and of the shadow of death, a land that no man passeth through, and where no man dwelt," Jer. ii. 6. The world, in which we sojourn for a season, does not appear to us in this unpleasing view at first. The spirit, and the things of it, are congenial to our depraved inclinations; and especially in early life, our unexperienced hearts form high expectations from it; and we rather hope to find it a paradise than a wilderness. But when the convincing power of the Holy Spirit opens the eyes of the understanding, we awake as from a dream; the enchantment by which we were deluded is broken, and we then begin to judge rightly of the world: that it is a wearisome wilderness indeed, and that our only important concern with it is to get happily out of it. In a spiritual view, a wilderness is a significant emblem of the state of mankind, both Jews and Heathens, at that period which the apostle calls the fulness of time, when God sent forth his Son, Gal. iv. 4.

Israel, once the beloved people of God, was at that time so extremely degenerated, that, a few individuals excepted, the vineyard of the Lord, so highly cultivated, so signally protected, yielded only wild grapes, Isa. v. 4. Though they were not addicted to imitate the idolatry of the Heathens, as their forefathers had been, they were no less alienated from the true God; and their wickedness was the more aggravated, for being practised under a professed attachment to the forms of his law. They drew nigh to God with their lips, but their hearts were far from him, Mark vii. 6. Their very worship profaned the temple in which they gloried, and the holy house of prayer, through their abominations, was become a den of thieves. They owned the divine authority of the scriptures, and read them with seeming attention, but rendered them of none effect, through the greater attention they paid to the corrupt traditions of their elders. They boasted in their relation to Abraham as their father, but proved themselves to be indeed the children of those who had persecuted and murdered the prophets, Matt. xxiii. 30, 31. The Scribes and Pharisees, who sat in the chair of Moses, and were the public teachers of the people, under an exterior garb of sanctity, of prayer, and fasting, were guilty of oppression, fraud, and uncleanness; and while they trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others, their real character was a combination of pride and hypocrisy. Therefore he who knew their hearts, and saw through all their disguises, compared them to painted sepulchres, fair to outward appearance, but within full of filth and impurity, Matt. xxiii. 27. From the spirit of these blind guides, we may judge of the spirit of the blind people who held them in admiration, and were willingly directed and led by them. Thus was the faithful city become a harlot: it was once full of judgment, righteousness lodged in it, but now murderers, Isa. i. 21. Such a wilderness was Judea when Messiah condescended to visit it.

Among the Heathens, ignorance, idolatry, sensuality, and cruelty universally prevailed. Their pretended wise men had indeed talked of wisdom and morality from age to age, but their speculations were no more than swelling words of vanity, cold, trifling, uncertain, and without any valuable influence either upon themselves or upon others. They had philosophers, poets, orators, musicians, and artists, eminent in their way; but the nations reputed the most civilized were overwhelmed with abominable wickedness equally with the rest. The shocking effect of their idolatry upon their moral principles and conduct, notwithstanding their attainments in arts and science, is described by the apostle in the close of the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans. With great propriety, therefore, the state of the world, both Jew and Gentile, considered in a moral view, is compared by the prophet to a wilderness—a barren and dreary waste. The pursuits and practices of the world were diametrically opposite to the spirit and design of that kingdom which Messiah was about to set up, and therefore, as the event proved, directly disposed to withstand his progress. But,

II. Before his appearance a way was prepared for him in the wilderness.

The providence of God, by a gradual train of dispensations, disposed the political state of mankind in a subserviency to this great event. All the commotions and revolutions which take place in the kingdoms of the earth are so many detached parts of a complicated but wisely-determined plan, of which the establishment of Messiah's kingdom is the final cause. The kings and politicians of the world are not aware of this. God is not in their thoughts. But while they pursue their own ends, and make havoc of the peace of mankind, to gratify their own interests and ambition, and look no higher, they are ignorantly, and without intention, acting as instruments of the will of God. The wrath of man is over-ruled to his praise and his purpose, (Psalm lxxvi. 10,) and succeeds so far as it is instrumental to the accomplishment of his designs, and no farther. While they move in this line, their schemes, however injudiciously laid, and whatever disproportion

there may seem between the means they are possessed of and the vast objects they aim at, prosper beyond their own expectations; but the remainder of their wrath he will restrain. Their best projected and best supported enterprises issue in shame and disappointment, if they are not necessary parts of that chain of causes and events which the Lord of all has appointed. Thus Sennacherib, when sent by the God whom he knew not to execute his displeasure against the kingdom of Judah, had, for a time, a rapid and uninterrupted series of conquests; (Isa. xxxvii. 26—29;) but his attempt upon Jerusalem was beyond the limits of his commission, and therefore failed.

Among the principal instruments who were appointed to prepare a way in the wilderness for Messiah, and to facilitate the future spread of his kingdom, we may take notice of Alexander; and this designation secured his success, though the extravagancies, excesses, and rashness which marked his character, were sufficient to have rendered his undertakings abortive, had he not been in the hand of the Lord of hosts, as an axe or a saw in the hand of the workman. By his conquests the knowledge of the Greek language was diffused among many nations; and the Hebrew scriptures being soon afterwards translated into that language, an expectation of some great deliverer was raised far and wide, before Messiah appeared. When this service was fulfilled, the haughty presumptuous worm who had been employed in it, was no longer necessary, and therefore was soon laid aside: and all his proud designs, for the establishment of his own family and dominion, perished with him. His empire was divided towards the four winds of heaven, and this division likewise contributed to bring forward the purpose of God, Dan. viii. 8. For each of the four kingdoms established by his successors, being thus separated, became a more easy prey to the Roman power. This power, which had been gradually increasing and extending in the course of several hundred years, was at its height about the time of our Lord's birth. The greatest part of the habitable earth which was at that time distinctly known was united under one empire, composed of various kingdoms and governments, which, though once independent and considerable, were then no more than Roman provinces; and as all the provinces had an immediate connexion with Rome, a way was thus prepared, and an intercourse opened on every side, for the promulgation of the gospel.

Among the Jews, the professing people of God, a way was prepared for Messiah by the ministry of his harbinger, John the Baptist, who came in the spirit and power of Elijah (as had been foretold of him by the prophets, particularly by the last of the prophets, Malachi,) preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, and proclaiming that the Saviour and his kingdom were at hand. He who sent him accompanied his mission with a divine power. A multitude of persons, of various descriptions, were impressed by his message, insomuch that John himself seems to have been astonished at the numbers and characters of those who came to his baptism.

When the ministry of John had thus previously disposed the minds of many for the reception of Messiah, and engaged the attention of the people at large, Messiah himself entered upon his public office, on the same scene and among the same people. As he increased, John willingly decreased. So the morning star ceases to be seen as the sun advances above the horizon. This distinguished servant of God having finished his work, was removed to a better world. Not in the triumphant manner in which Elijah was translated, but as he came to announce a new dispensation, under which believers were to expect opposition and ill-treatment, to walk by faith, and frequently to be called to seal their testimony with their blood, he was permitted to fall a sacrifice to the revenge of a wanton woman; and though we are assured that none of the race of Adam was greater in the estimation of God than he, his death was asked and procured as the reward of an idle dance, Matth. xi. 11; xiv. 8—11.

III. The latter part of my text describes the manner and immediate effects of Messiah's appearance during his personal ministry, with an intimation of its future and more extensive consequences.

The valleys shall be exalted.—A valley is an emblem of a low condition. Such was the condition of most of our Lord's followers; but his notice and favour exalted them highly. He came to preach the gospel to the poor, to fill the hungry with good things, to save the chief of sinners, to open a door of hope and salvation to persons of the vilest and most despicable characters in human estimation. Such, for instance, was the woman mentioned by the evangelist Luke, chap. vii. 37, 38. The Pharisee thought our Lord dishonoured himself, by permitting such a one to touch him, nor had she a word to say in her own behalf. But the compassionate Saviour highly exalted her, when he vouchsafed to plead her cause, to express his gracious acceptance of her tears and love, and to assure her that her sins, though many, were all forgiven. Very low likewise was the state of the malefactor on the cross: he had committed great crimes, was suffering grievous torments, and in the very jaws of death, Luke xxiii. 42. But grace visited his heart; he was plucked as a brand out of the fire, and exalted to paradise and glory. The world accounts the proud happy, and honours the covetous if they be

prosperous. But true honour cometh from God. They who are partakers of the faith and hope of the gospel, and have interest in the precious promises, are indeed the rich, the happy, the excellent of the earth, however they may be unnoticed or despised by their fellow-creatures. The honour of places likewise is to be considered in this light. Bethlehem, though but of little note among the thousands of Judah, was rendered more illustrious by the birth of Messiah than Babylon or Rome. The Galileans were held in contempt by the inhabitants of Jerusalem, as a mean and provincial people; but the places in Galilee which our Lord frequently visited, or where he sometimes resided, are spoken of as exalted unto heaven, by the honour and privilege of his presence, though some of them were no more than fishing-towns. And so at this day, if we have spiritual discernment, we shall judge that a little village, where the gospel is known, prized, and adorned by a suitable conversation, has a dignity and importance far preferable to all the parade of a wealthy metropolis, if destitute of the like privileges.

On the contrary, every mountain and hill shall be brought low.—Messiah came to pour contempt on all human glory. He detected the wickedness and confounded the pride of the Scribes, and Pharisees, and rulers, and made it appear that what is highly esteemed among men, the το υψηλον, or summit of their boasted excellency, is worthless, yea, abomination in the sight of God, Luke xvi. 15. And by living himself in a state of poverty, and associating chiefly with poor people, he placed the vanity of the distinctions and affluence which mankind generally admire and envy, in the most striking and humiliating light. Such likewise was and will be the effect of his gospel. When faithfully preached, it is found mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong-holds, high thoughts, and every species of self-exaltation. When the convincing word touches the heart, it has an effect like the hand-writing which Belshazzar saw upon the wall, Dan. v. 6. In that day the lofty looks of man are humbled, and his haughtiness bowed down; (Isa. ii. 11;) he dares no longer plead the goodness of his heart, or trust to the work of his hands. A sense of forgiveness and acceptance through the Beloved, received by faith in his atonement, lays him still lower: he now renounces as loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord, all that he once esteemed as gain, and is glad that he has nothing to trust or glory in but the cross, Phil. iii. 7, 8. Farther, every mountain that opposes the kingdom of Messiah, in due time must sink into a plain, Zech. iv. 7. Though the nations rage, and the rulers take counsel together, he who sitteth in the heavens will support and maintain his own work, and all their power and policy shall fall before it.

The crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain.—He came to rectify the perverse disposition of the hearts of men, to soften and subdue their obstinate spirits, and to form to himself a willing people in the day of his power. The Jewish teachers, by their traditions and will-worship had given an apparent obliquity to the straight and perfect rule of the law of God, and deformed the beauties of holiness, binding heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, upon the conscience; but he vindicated the law from their corrupt glosses, and made the path of obedience plain, practicable, and pleasant.

Thus, the glory of the Lord was revealed. —Not to every eye: many, prejudiced by his outward appearance, and by the low mistaken views the Jews indulged of the office and kingdom of Messiah, whom they expected, could see no form or excellence in him that they should desire him; but his disciples could say, "We beheld his glory," John i. 14. He spake with authority. His word was power. He controlled the elements, he raised the dead. He knew, and revealed, and judged the thoughts of men's hearts. He forgave sin, and thus exercised the rights and displayed the perfections of divine sovereignty in his own person. But the prophecy looks forward to future times. After his ascension he filled his apostles and disciples with light and power, and sent them forth in all directions to proclaim his love and grace to a sinful world. Then the glory of the Lord was revealed, and spread from one kingdom to another people. We still wait for the full accomplishment of this promise, and expect a time when the whole earth shall be filled with his glory: For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. It is to the power of his word that we owe the continuance of day and night, and the regular return of the seasons of the year. But these appointments are only for a limited term; the hour is coming, when the frame of nature shall be dissolved. Heaven and earth shall pass away; but not a jot or tittle of what he hath declared concerning his kingdom of grace shall fail, till the whole be fulfilled.

Those of you who have heard the Messiah will do well to recollect, whether you were affected by such thoughts as these while this passage was performed; or whether you were only captivated by the music, and paid no more regard to the words than if they had no meaning. They are, however, the great truths of God. May they engage your serious attention, now they are thus set before you

SERMON III.

THE SHAKING OF THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH.

Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land: And I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts.—Haggai ii. 6, 7.

God shook the earth when he proclaimed his law to Israel from Sinai. The description, though very simple, presents to our thoughts a scene unspeakably majestic, grand, and awful. The mountain was in flames at the top, and trembled to its basis, Exod. xix. 16—19. Dark clouds, thunderings and lightnings filled the air. The hearts of the people, of the whole people, trembled likewise; and even Moses himself said, "I exceedingly fear and quake." Then, as the apostle, referring to this passage, observes, the voice of the Lord shook the earth, Heb. xii. 26. But the prophet here speaks of another, a greater, a more important, and extensive concussion. Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake not the earth only, but also the heavens.

If we really believe that the scriptures are true, that the prophecies were delivered by holy men, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, and that they shall all be certainly fulfilled,—how studious should we be to attain a right understanding of passages and events, in which we are so nearly interested, that our hearts may be duly affected by them! But, alas! experience and observation strongly confirm the remark of the poet,

Men are but children of a larger growth.

If you put a telescope into the hands of a child, he will probably admire the outside, especially if it be finely ornamented. But the use of it, in giving a more distinct view of distant objects, is what the child has no conception of. The music of the Messiah is but an ornament of the words, which have a very weighty sense. This sense no music can explain, and when rightly understood, will have such an effect as no music can produce. That the music of the Messiah has a great effect in its own kind, I can easily believe. The ancients, to describe the power of the music of Orpheus, pretend, that when he played upon his harp, the wild beasts thronged around him to listen, and seemed to forget their natural fierceness. Such expressions are figurative, and designed to intimate, that, by his address and instructions, he civilized men of fierce and savage dispositions. But if we were to allow the account to be true in the literal sense, I should still suppose that the wild beasts were affected by his music only while they heard it, and that it did not actually change their natures, and render lions and tigers gentle as lambs, from that time forward. Thus I can allow, that they who heard the Messiah might be greatly impressed during the performance; but when it was ended, I suppose they would retain the very same dispositions they had before it began. And many, I fear, were no more affected by this sublime declaration of the Lord's design to shake the heavens and the earth, than they would have been, if the same music had been set to the words of a common ballad.

The Jews, when they returned from captivity, and undertook to rebuild the temple of the Lord, met with many discouragements. They were disturbed by the opposition and arts of their enemies, who at one time so far prevailed, as to compel them, for a season, to intermit the work. And when the foundation of the temple was laid, the joy of those who hoped soon to see the solemn worship of God restored, was damped by the grief of others, who remembered the magnificence of the first temple, and wept to think how far the second temple would come short of it, Hag. ii. 3. In these circumstances, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah were sent to animate the people by a promise, that, inferior as the second temple might appear, compared with that which Solomon built, the glory of the latter house should be greater than the glory of the former, Ezra iii. 12, 13. Had this depended upon a profusion of silver and gold, the Lord could have provided it: for "the silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts." But the glory spoken of was of a different kind. The presence of Messiah in the second temple would render it far more honourable and glorious, though less pompous, than the temple of Solomon; and would be attended with greater consequences than even the manifestation of the God of Israel on Mount Sinai. Then he only shook the earth; but under the second temple he would shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land, to introduce the kingdom of Messiah.

We may consider from the words,

I. A character of Messiah,—"The Desire of all nations."

II. The effects of his appearance,—"Shaking the heavens and the earth."

III. His "filling the house with glory." This clause of ver. 7, is not in the passage set to music; but as it is an eminent part of the prophecy, I shall not exclude it.

I. Messiah is here styled, "The Desire of all nations." The propriety of this title may be illustrated by two considerations.

1. Before he came into the world to save sinners, an expectation prevailed in many nations, that a great deliverer and friend of mankind was at hand. This was, perhaps,

partly the effect of some ancient traditions, founded on the promises of God respecting the seed of the woman, the traces of which, though much corrupted by the addition of fables, were not worn out—but might be chiefly owing to several dispersions of the people of Israel, and imperfect notices, derived from the scriptures in their hands. The sense of many prophecies concerning Messiah, though misapplied, is remarkably expressed in a short poem of Virgil,* written a few years before our Saviour's birth. This eclogue, of which we have a beautiful imitation in our own language by Mr. Pope, affords a sufficient proof that the Heathens had an idea of some illustrious personage, who would shortly appear, and restore peace, prosperity, and all the blessings of their imaginary golden age to mankind. The miseries and evils, with which the world was filled, made the interposition of such a deliverer highly desirable. There were even a few among the Heathens, such as Socrates and his immediate disciples, who seem to have felt the necessity of a divine teacher; and to be sensible that man, in a state of nature, was too depraved, and too ignorant, to be either able or disposed to worship God acceptably without one. There is reason to believe, that the revelation which we enjoy, though despised by too many who affect to be called philosophers in modern times, would have been highly prized by the wisest and best of the philosophers of antiquity. Socrates thought men were not capable of knowing and expressing their own wants, nor of asking what was good for themselves, unless it should please God to send them an instructor from heaven, to teach them how to pray. And therefore,

2. The need that all nations had of such a Saviour, is sufficient to establish his right to this title, admitting they had no knowledge or expectation of him. If we could suppose a nation involved for ages in the darkness of night, though they had no previous notion of light, yet light might be said to be their desire, because the light, whenever they should enjoy it, would put an end to their calamity, would answer their wants, and, in that sense accomplish their wishes; for if they could not directly wish for light, they would naturally wish for relief. The Heathens were miserably bewildered. They had a thirst for happiness, which could not be satisfied by any, or all the expedients and pursuits within their reach. They had fears and forebodings of conscience, for which they knew no remedy. They were so sensible, both of their guilt and their weakness, that, being ignorant of the character of the true God, and of that forgiveness which is with him, in times of extremity they frequently offered the most expensive sacrifices to the objects of their idolatrous superstition, even the blood and lives of their children, Micah vi. 6. When Messiah appeared, as he was the glory of Israel, so he was a light to the Gentiles, as we shall have opportunity of observing more at large hereafter. He, therefore, who came purposely to bless the nations, by turning them from darkness to light, and from the worship of dumb idols to serve the living and true God, may justly be called their desire, though in the time of their ignorance, they could form no suitable conception of him.

II. "I will shake the heavens and the earth."—This part of the prophecy has been, in a measure, literally fulfilled. At his birth, a new star appeared. At his death, the sun withdrew his shining, the earth quaked, the rocks rent, and the dead arose. During his life, he often suspended and over-ruled the stated laws of nature, and exercised supreme power over the visible and invisible worlds. He shook the kingdom of darkness, spoiled principalities and powers, triumphing over them by his cross. He shook the kingdoms of the earth; the idols trembled and disappeared before his gospel, till at length the Roman empire renounced Heathenism, and embraced the Christian name.

But the language of prophecy is highly figurative. Mountains and trees, land and water, sun and moon, heaven and earth, often signify nations, people, and governments; and particularly, heaven and earth are used to denote the religious and political establishment of Israel; or, as we say, their constitution in church and state. This, without doubt, is the primary sense here. The appearance of Messiah shall be connected with the total dissolution of the Jewish economy. The whole of their Levitical institution was fulfilled, superseded, and abrogated by Messiah, which was solemnly signified by the rending of the vail of the temple from the top to the bottom at his death. And a few years afterwards the temple itself was destroyed, by which event, the worship of God according to the law, of which the temple-service was an essential part, was rendered utterly impracticable. Their civil state likewise was dissolved; they were extirpated from the promised land, and dispersed far and wide among the nations of the earth. Though, in one sense, they are preserved, by the wonderful providence of God, as a distinct people, unaffected by the changes and customs around them; in another sense, they are not a people, having neither settlement nor government, but living as strangers and foreigners in every country where their lot has been cast, Hos. iii. 4. Nothing like this can be found in the history of mankind. It is an obvious, striking, and perpetual proof of the truth of the scriptures. What was foretold concerning them by Moses and the

* Virg. Ecl. iv.

succeeding prophets, is accomplished to a demonstration before our eyes. How unlikely was it once that it should be thus! yet thus it must be, because the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. And all that he has spoken is equally sure. He will yet again shake the heavens and the earth, dissolve the frame of nature, and execute his threatened judgments upon all those who do not receive and obey his gospel.

III. "He shall fill this house with glory." He did so, when he condescended to visit it in person. The blind and the lame came thither to him, and he healed them, Matth. xxi. 13—16. Children felt his power, and sung hosannah to the son of David, a title appropriate to Messiah; and when the Pharisees rebuked them, he said, "If these should hold their peace, the stones would cry out," Luke xix. 40. As the Lord in his own house, he purged the temple, and drove out those who profaned it, and not one of his enemies durst offer the least resistance to his will. And when he left it the last time, with sovereign authority, he denounced that awful sentence, which was soon afterwards executed by the Romans, both upon the temple and the nation, Matth. xxiii. 37. His glory filled the temple when he was an infant, so that Simeon and Anna then acknowledged his character, and spake of him to those who were waiting for the consolation of Israel, Luke ii. 25, 38. Especially his glory was manifested, when he proclaimed himself the fountain of life, and invited every thirsty weary sinner to come to him, to drink and live for ever, John vii. 37.

The temple of Jerusalem has been long since destroyed. But he has still a house, a house not made with hands. This is his church, comprising all the members of his mystical body. He dwells in each of them individually; he dwells in and among them collectively. Where two or three are met in his name, where his ordinances are administered and prized, where his gospel is faithfully preached and cordially received, there he is present in the midst of them: There his glory is seen, his voice heard, his power felt, his goodness tasted, and the savour of his name is diffused as a precious ointment, which refreshes the heart of his people, renews their strength, and comforts them under all their sorrows and cares. The glory and magnificence of the temple-worship, even in the days of Solomon, was faint compared with the glory displayed to the hearts of believers who worship him in spirit and in truth, under the New Testament dispensation. But it can only be perceived by an enlightened and spiritual mind. To outward appearance all may be low and humiliating. The malice of their enemies has often constrained his people to assemble in woods and on mountains, in places under ground or in the dead of the night, to secrete themselves from informers. But vaulted roofs and costly garments, the solemn parade of processions, music and choristers, and the presence of nobles and dignitaries, are not necessary to constitute the glory of gospel-worship. It is enough that he, in whose name they meet, condescends to visit them with the power and influence of his Spirit, to animate and hear their prayers, to feed them with the good word of his grace, and to fill them with joy and peace in believing. If they have these blessings, they desire no more, they are compensated for all their difficulties and hardships; and, however unnoticed and despised by the world, they can say, "This is none other than the house of God, this is the gate of heaven," Gen. xxviii. 7. For they approach by faith to the city of the living God, the Jerusalem which is above, to the worship which is carried on day without night, by the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, Heb. xii. 22.

But every member of this mystical temple, being by nature afar off from God, experiences a previous change, which may be not unfitly described by the terms of my text. Before the Lord takes possession of his people, and in order to it, he shakes the heavens and the earth. Their former views of God and of themselves are altered by a light which penetrates the soul. All that they have been building in religion till then is shaken and overturned. Their vain hopes are shaken to the foundation. This concussion makes way for the perception of his glory as a Saviour. In this day of his power they are made willing to throw open the gates of their hearts, that the King of glory may enter.

But as I do not stand here to amuse you with a declamation on a subject in which you are not immediately interested, and as my office as a preacher both warrants and requires me to address myself not only to your understandings but likewise to your consciences, I must be allowed, before I conclude, to propose this question to your consideration. Is Messiah, the desire of all nations, the object of your chief desire? How much depends upon the answer? Do you wish to know your present state in the sight of God? If you are faithful to yourselves you may be satisfied, provided you will abide by the decision of scripture. God is well-pleased in his Son; if you are well-pleased with him, if he is precious to you, and the desire of your soul is supremely directed to him, then you assuredly possess the beginning, the foretaste, and the earnest of eternal life. If you so enter into the descriptions given in the Bible of his person, love, office, and glory, as to place your whole dependence upon him, to devote yourselves simply to him, and to place your happiness in his favour, then you are

happy indeed! happy even at present, though not exempted from a share in the afflictions incident to this mortal state. For your sins are pardoned, your persons are accepted in the Beloved: to you belong the promises of guidance, protection, and supply through life, victory over death, and then a crown of glory which fadeth not away. To say all in a few words, God is your Father, and heaven is your home.

But on the other hand, if you trust in yourselves that you are righteous and good, at least comparatively so; if your attachment to the business or the pleasures of the world engrosses your thoughts and application, so that you have no leisure to attend to the record which God has given of his Son, or no relish for the subject, you have been hitherto guilty of treating the most glorious display of the wisdom and goodness of God with contempt. Many persons thus employed and thus disposed, bear respectable characters in civil life, from which I do not wish to detract. But however amiable you may be in the judgment of your fellow-creatures, you are a sinner in the sight of God, and will be treated by him as an enemy to his government and glory, if you finally persist in a rejection of his gospel. The great point which will determine your state for eternity, will be this, What think you of Christ? For it is written, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha," 1 Cor. xvi. 22. He must and will fall under the curse and condemnation of the law, and be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. To-day, therefore, while it is called to-day (for to-morrow is not ours,) may you hear his voice, and flee for refuge to the hope set before you!

SERMON IV.

THE LORD COMING TO HIS TEMPLE.

The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the Messenger of the covenant in whom ye delight: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap.—And he shall purify the sons of Levi—that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.—Malachi iii. 1—3.

"WHEREUNTO shall we liken the people of this generation, and to what are they like?" Luke vii. 31. I represent to myself a number of persons of various characters, involved in one common charge of high treason. They are already in a state of confinement, but not yet brought to their trial. The facts, however, are so plain, and the evidence against them so strong and pointed, that there is not the least doubt of their guilt being fully proved, and that nothing but a pardon can preserve them from punishment. In this situation, it should seem their wisdom to avail themselves of every expedient in their power for obtaining mercy. But they are entirely regardless of their danger, and wholly taken up with contriving methods of amusing themselves, that they may pass away the term of their imprisonment with as much cheerfulness as possible. Among other resources they call in the assistance of music. And amidst a great variety of subjects in this way, they are particularly pleased with one. They choose to make the solemnities of their impending trial, the character of their judge, the methods of his procedure, and the awful sentence to which they are exposed, the ground-work of a musical entertainment. And, as if they were quite unconcerned in the event, their attention is chiefly fixed upon the skill of the composer, in adapting the style of his music to the very solemn language and subject with which they are trifling. The King, however, out of his great clemency and compassion towards those who have no pity for themselves, prevents them with his goodness. Undesired by them, he sends them a gracious message. He assures them that he is unwilling they should suffer: he requires, yea, he entreats them to submit. He points out a way in which their confession and submission shall be certainly accepted; and in this way, which he condescends to prescribe, he offers them a free and a full pardon. But instead of taking a single step towards a compliance with his goodness, they set his message likewise to music; and this, together with a description of their present state, and of the fearful doom awaiting them if they continue obstinate, is sung for their diversion, accompanied with the sound of cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of instruments, Dan. iii. 5. Surely, if such a case as I have supposed could be found in real life, though I might admire the musical taste of these people, I should commiserate their insensibility!

But is not this case more than a supposition? Is it not, in the most serious sense, actually realized amongst ourselves? I should insult your understandings if I judged a long application necessary. I know my supposition must have already led your thoughts to the subject of the Messiah, and to the spirit and temper of at least the greater part of the performers, and of the audiences. The holy scripture concludes all mankind under sin, Rom. iii. 9. It charges them all with treason and rebellion against the great sovereign Lawgiver and Benefactor, and declares the

misery to which, as sinners, we are obnoxious. But God is long-suffering, and waits to be gracious. The stroke of death, which would instantly place us before his awful tribunal, is still suspended. In the mean time he affords us his gospel, by which he assures us there is forgiveness with him. He informs us of a Saviour, and that, of his great love to sinners, he has given his only Son to be an atonement and mediator in favour of all who shall sue for mercy in his name. The character of this Saviour, his unspeakable love, his dreadful sufferings, the agonies he endured in Gethsemane, and upon the cross, are made known to us. And as his past humiliation, so his present glory, and his invitation to come to him for pardon and eternal life, are largely declared. These are the principal points expressed in the passages of the Messiah. Mr. Handel, who set them to music, has been commemorated and praised, many years after his death, in a place professedly devoted to the praise and worship of God; yea, (if I am not misinformed,) the stated worship of God in that place was suspended for a considerable time, that it might be duly prepared for the commemoration of Mr. Handel. But, alas! how few are disposed to praise and commemorate Messiah himself! The same great truths, divested of the music, when delivered from the pulpit, are heard by many admirers of the oratorio with indifference, too often with contempt.

Having thus, as I conceived myself bound in duty, plainly and publicly delivered my sentiments, of the great impropriety of making the fundamental truths of christianity the subject of a public amusement, I leave what I have said to your serious reflections, hoping it will not be forgotten; for I do not mean to trouble you often with a repetition of it. Let us now consider the passage before us. If you read it with attention, and consider the great ideas it suggests, and the emphatical language with which they are clothed, you will not, perhaps, think the manner of my introducing it wholly improper.

Malachi confirms and unites the prophecies of Isaiah and Haggai, which were the subject of our two last discourses. John is the messenger, spoken of in the beginning of the first verse, sent to prepare the way of the Lord. Then the Lord himself shall come suddenly to his temple, that is, immediately after the appearance of his forerunner, and with regard to the people in general, unexpectedly.

The question, "Who may abide the day of his coming?" intimates the greatness and solemnity of the event. If we take his coming in an extensive sense to denote the whole of his sojourning upon earth, from his incarnation to his ascension, it is unspeakably the greatest of all events recorded in the annals of mankind; and though he lived in the form of a servant, and died the death of a malefactor, the vast consequences which depend upon his appearance under these humiliating circumstances, rendered it a manner of coming every way worthy of himself. It afforded a more awful discovery of the majesty, glory, and holiness of God, than was displayed upon Mount Sinai, and proved a closer and more searching appeal to the hearts and consciences of men. To enter more into the spirit and meaning of the question here proposed, we shall briefly take notice of the following points, which the words offer to our serious meditation. May the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to glorify the Saviour, enlighten our hearts to understand them, with application to ourselves!

I. The names which are here ascribed to Messiah.

II. The suddenness of his coming.

III. The searching power of it in general, expressed by "a refiner's fire," and by "fuller's soap."

IV. Its purifying power on the sons of Levi, the priesthood in particular.

I. The names ascribed to Messiah.

The Lord.—It is a general rule with our translators to express LORD in capital letters, where it answers to Jehovah in the Hebrew, and there only. The word here is not Jehovah, but Adonai. It is however a name of God, though not incommunicable like the other, being frequently applied to kings and superiors. It properly implies authority and rule, as we say, A Lord and Master. In this connexion it is undoubtedly a divine name. The Lord is said to come to his temple, to his own temple. It was a house consecrated to the God of Israel. The first temple he honoured with tokens of his presence; the second he visited in person; on which account it exceeded the first in glory. Messiah, therefore, who appeared in our nature, and was known amongst men as a man, and who is now worshipped both in heaven and upon earth, is the God of Israel. He came to his own. This doctrine of God manifest in the flesh, is the pillar and ground of truth: the only foundation on which a sinner, who knows the just desert of his sin, can build a solid hope of salvation, is, that Jesus Christ is the true God and eternal life, 1 John v. 20. Unless this be admitted, the whole tenor both of the Old and New Testament, is unintelligible. To say that this doctrine approves itself to human reason in its present fallen depraved state, would be to contradict the apostle, who asserts, that no man can say that Jesus Christ is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost, 1 Cor. xii. 3. But it is highly reasonable to those who see that they must perish, without such an atonement as shall declare the righteousness of God, no less than his mercy, in the forgiveness of sin; who feel the necessity of holiness in order to happiness; and are ac-

quainted with the nature and variety of the snares, temptations, and enemies to which they are exposed. Such persons cannot venture their eternal concerns upon the dignity, or care, or power, or patience of a mere creature, however exalted and excellent; they must be assured that their Saviour is almighty, or they dare not trust in him; nor would they dare to honour the Son as they honour the Father, to love him with all their heart, and soul, and strength, to devote themselves absolutely to his service, and to expect their supreme happiness from his favour and approbation, if they did not know that he is over all, God blessed for ever.

With respect to the inferior character he sustains in our nature, and for our sakes, as the Father's servant, he is styled, The Messenger of the covenant. He is the gift, promise, head, and substance of the everlasting covenant. And he came himself to establish the covenant, and to declare and bestow the blessings it contained. God, who had before spoken at divers times and in sundry manners by his prophets, spoke in the fulness of time by his Son; (Heb. i. 1;) testifying to him by a voice from heaven, This is my beloved Son, hear him; in him I am well pleased, Mat. iii. 17. To the same purpose our Lord spake of himself. He prefaced his gracious invitation to all, without exception, who are weary and heavy laden, to come to him for rest, (Mat. xi. 27,) with a declaration of his commission and authority, saying, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father, and no one (οὐδεὶς) knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any one the Father, save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." The law was given by Moses; (John i. 17;) the moral law, to discover the extent and abounding of sin; the ceremonial law, to point out, by typical sacrifices and ablutions, the way in which forgiveness was to be sought and obtained;—but grace to relieve us from the condemnation of the one, and truth answerable to the types and shadows of the other, came by Jesus Christ.

It is farther said, "The Lord whom ye seek, and the messenger in whom ye delight."—Messiah was the hope and desire of the true Israel of God, from the earliest times; and when he was born into the world, there was a prepared people waiting and longing for him, as their consolation. The people at large likewise professed to expect great things from the coming of Messiah. But their expectations were low and earthly. They supposed that he would deliver them from the Roman yoke, and give them victory and power over the heathen nations. The more grievous bondage of sin under which they were enslaved, they were not sensible of, nor had they a disposition suited to the privileges and honours of the kingdom which he designed to establish; and therefore, their understandings being darkened by prejudice and prepossession, they could not discern his character. The prophecies which were read in their synagogues every sabbath, marked out the time and circumstances of Messiah's appearance, the places which he should principally visit, the doctrine he should teach, and the works which he should perform: but though all these particulars exactly applied to Jesus, they obstinately rejected him, and proceeded to fulfil what was farther foretold of his sufferings and death, with such a minute punctuality, as if they had designedly taken the prophecies for the rule of their conduct. Thus, by giving neither more nor less than thirty pieces of silver to his betrayer, by buying the potter's field, and no other, with the money afterwards; by casting lots for one of his garments, and making a distribution of the rest; by piercing his side contrary to the custom in such punishments, and by omitting to break his legs, which, from their treatment of the malefactors who suffered with him, seems to have been usual, in these and several other instances, they acted, though unwittingly, as if it had been their design and study to accomplish the scriptures to their own confusion and condemnation.

II. This was the reason why his coming to his temple was to them sudden. Though long foretold and long expected, and though the precise time of his advent, and the accompanying signs, were accurately defined and described, yet when the season arrived, he came suddenly, unlooked for, and unknown. He came upon them in an hour that they thought not of, and in a manner of which they were not aware. When he stood in the midst of them, they knew not that it was he. How dreadfully does sin harden and infatuate the hearts of men! The Jews, in our Saviour's time, furnish us with a striking instance, that it is possible for people fatally to miscarry with the greatest advantages and means for information in their possession. They accounted themselves the people of God, made their boast of his law, and their relation to Abraham. But they hated Messiah, and crucified him, who was the object of Abraham's faith. The opposition of their leaders and teachers was the most malicious, for many of them acted against the light of their minds, and were often convicted in their consciences, though they refused to be convinced. But an ignorant attachment to these blind guides was ruinous to their blind followers, who, though they sometimes, from a view of his mighty works, were struck with astonishment, and constrained to say, "Is not this the son of David?" were at length influenced by their priests to prefer a murderer to him, and, with a clamorous importunity, to compel Pilate to put him to death. The like misapprehen-

sions produce the like effects among professed christians at this day. We likewise have the scriptures: but how many who admit their authority in words, live willingly ignorant of their contents, and act in direct contradiction to their tenor! The power of the Saviour is likewise displayed among us, his preached gospel is daily made effectual to the great purposes for which it is vouchsafed; yet multitudes reject it with no less pertinacity than the Jews rejected him in person. At length death surprises them, and they sink into darkness beyond recall. To them the Lord may be said to come suddenly, for they think not of him till they actually find themselves at his tribunal. And this not only when they are cut off by a sudden stroke, but often when their dissolution is most gradual, and every one about them can perceive its approach by their countenances; they themselves, though wasting with disease, and worn out with pain, still flatter themselves with hopes of amendment and recovery to their last gasp; and a lingering death is to them no less sudden than if they were killed by a flash of lightning.

III. It is asked, "Who may abide the day of his coming!" The effect is compared to a refiner's fire, and to fuller's soap. The refiner's fire penetrates the metal, and thereby searches, discovers, and consumes the dross. The fuller's soap also, though it does not destroy the texture of the cloth, cleanses it, by removing, and as it were consuming the spots and defilement which are found in it. The idea conveyed by these illustrations is the same. The day of his coming is a day of trial, a trial which issues in the purification of the work of God in his church, and in the detection and destruction of every thing in it which is contrary to his will.

The coming of Messiah may be taken in several senses.

To the Jews, according to the promise of God repeated from age to age, he came in person. The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among them, John i. 12. The term in the original alludes to the visible symbol of the divine presence, which resided in the tabernacle and temple. Thus for a season he resided among them, in a temple not made with hands, but formed, by the immediate agency of the Holy Spirit, in the womb of a virgin. This was a happy time to those who received and acknowledged him. But the bulk of the nation could not abide the trial which his appearance exposed them to, they were proved by it to be but reprobate and counterfeit silver. The thoughts of many hearts were revealed, Luke ii. 35. Many specious characters were detected. The pretended sanctity and outward strictness of the Scribes and Pharisees, was evidenced to be mere hypocrisy. He exposed them in their true colours, and upon many occasions put them to shame and to silence. And where his word did not cleanse like soap, it burnt like fire, and the persons and places that rejected him were rendered inexcusable. Their great privilege of seeing his wonderful works, and hearing his gracious words, being abused, aggravated their guilt and condemnation, and made their doom heavier than that of Sodom and Gomorrah. To them the day of the Lord, which in their own sense they professed to desire was darkness, and not light, Amos v. 18. If he had not come and spoken to them himself, they had not had sin, John xv. 22. That is, comparatively, he found them great sinners, and they would have been such if he had not visited them. But after he had spoken to them, and spoken in vain, they had no cloak for their sin. From that time they were deprived of every shadow of plea, excuse, or extenuation. And all their former wickedness was light, compared with the enormous crime they were guilty of in rejecting and crucifying the Son of God. By refusing him, they rendered their case helpless and hopeless, because there is no other name but his, given among men, whereby they may be saved. But he cleansed those who received him, he removed their guilt, their fears, their ignorance. He gave them a clean heart and a new spirit. Yet to these also he was as a refiner's fire, and as fuller's soap. They likewise had prejudices and selfish tempers, which were not at once removed. He called them to a state of suffering and self-denial, to forsake all, and to take up their cross daily for his sake.

In another sense, his coming is not restrained to a particular time. Wherever his gospel is preached, the Lord is come. It is by the gospel he rides forth prosperously, conquering and to conquer, Psalm xlv. 4. Thus he has promised to be present with his ministers, and wherever two or three are met in his name, to the end of the world. Thus he is come to us. And the effects are the same as when he was personally upon earth. His gospel still discovers the thoughts of many hearts. Many persons who till then were reputed religious, by the contempt they cast upon this wonderful expedient of infinite wisdom and love to save sinners, manifest their ignorance and hatred of the law and holiness of God, and that the religion they pretend to is an empty lifeless form, destitute of love and power. To them, though in itself a savour of life, it proves a savour of death. It provokes their enmity, increases their obduracy, and leaves them without excuse. But it is life indeed to those who receive it. They are raised by it from a death of sin, unto a life of righteousness and peace. Their tempers, desires, pursuits, and hopes are changed and elevated. Old things pass away,

and all things become new to them, according as it is written, "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature," 2 Cor. v. 17.

He comes to individuals by the power of his Spirit. This makes the word of his gospel effectual. For the kingdom of God is not in word only, but in power. When he thus visits the hearts of sinners, his word is like fire and soap; "quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword," Heb. iv. 12. Then they feel and tremble, and cry out with the prophet, "Wo is me, I am undone!" But in this way their dross is consumed, their defilement removed. When he thus wounds, he likewise heals. He gives them faith; by faith they look unto him, and are enlightened and saved.

We surely expect that he will come again. Not as he once came, in a state of humiliation. The Babe of Bethlehem, the Man of sorrows, who hung, and bled, and died upon the cross for our sins, will return in glory. "Behold, he cometh in the clouds, and every eye shall see him," Rev. i. 7. Concerning this day, emphatically called the day of the Lord, we may well say, "Who may abide it?" To those who have not been the subjects of his refining operations here, he will then be a consuming fire. That great day (for which all other days were made,) "when the Lord shall descend with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, will burn like an oven, and all the proud, and all that do wickedly, shall be as stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up," Mal. iv. 1. Where, then, shall the impenitent ungodly sinner appear? But it will be a joyful day to them that love his appearing. He will arise upon them, as the Sun of righteousness, with healing in his wings; he will wipe away their tears, vindicate their characters, acknowledge them before an assembled world, and say unto them, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you," Matth. xxv. 34.

IV. It is particularly said, "He will purify the sons of Levi,—that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." The sons of Levi, the priests, the officiating ministers of God, were gone out of the way, and had corrupted the covenant of the Lord, and thereby had caused many to stumble, Mal. ii. 8, 9. They dishonoured their office, and became themselves vile and contemptible. Thus they went on from bad to worse, till the men of that generation filled up the measure of the iniquity of their forefathers, by the rejection of Messiah. He also rejected them. The blasted barren fig-tree, (Matth. xxi. 19,) which withered to the very root at his word, was an emblem of their condition. In a little time, wrath came upon them to the uttermost; they saw the temple in which they had trusted, and which they had profaned, destroyed by fire, and the greater part of them perished. But a remnant of them was purified. We read, that after his ascension, a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith, Acts vi. 7. And his apostles and disciples were sent forth with a new spirit, and a new character, to offer and to serve in righteousness. The purport of this passage has been repeatedly exemplified under the christian dispensation. A declension from the simplicity and purity of worship, principles, and morals, was visible very early in the church. The progress of it was rapid, especially from the time of Constantine. When persecution ceased, and a tide of wealth and worldly honours flowed in upon those who, by their profession, were bound to be patterns of humility and self-denial to others; from that period, till the Reformation, ecclesiastical history affords us little more than a detail of such instances of pride, intrigue, oppression, and cruelty, under the pretext of religion, as had not been known among the heathens. And the nations which were relieved from the chains and darkness of Popery at the Reformation, did not long preserve much more than a name and a form to distinguish them. In most countries, the state became the idol of the church, and the church the creature of the state. How it is with us in this nation, I need not say. Facts speak for themselves. It is a mournful fact, that the ministry is become contemptible; nor is it difficult to assign the cause. But we are favoured with the gospel, and are eye-witnesses of its purifying power. It still produces the effects which marked its progress when it was preached by the apostles. It enlightens the dark mind, softens the hard heart, heals the wounded spirit; and many persons who before were burdensome to society, are rendered by it ornamental and useful. When every other argument and motive has failed of success, the consideration of the mercies of God in Christ, revealed by the gospel, constrains the believing sinner to present himself a living, willing, holy sacrifice unto God. Thus, being purified by the blood of Jesus, he offers to the Lord a sacrifice in righteousness. Such principles and aims are essential to a christian minister. He knows the terrors of the Lord, and has tasted of his goodness. He is constrained by love, the love of Christ, and the love of souls. He preaches, as the apostle did, Jesus Christ, and him crucified; a subject which, though despised and reproached by the formal Jew and the sceptical Greek, is evidenced by its efficacy to be the wisdom and power of God. Such ministers may be, and frequently are, depreciated and disregarded; but they cannot be contemptible, until integrity, benevolence, and usefulness, are the proper objects of contempt.

SERMON V.

IMMANUEL.

Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel, God with us.—Isaiah vii. 14.

THERE is a signature of wisdom and power impressed upon the works of God, which evidently distinguishes them from the feeble imitations of men. Not only the splendour of the sun, but the glimmering light of the glow-worm, proclaims his glory. The structure and growth of a blade of grass are the effects of the same power which produced the fabric of the heavens and the earth. In his word likewise he is inimitable. He has a style and manner peculiarly his own. What he is pleased to declare of himself by the prophet, may be prefixed as a proper motto to the whole revelation of his will in the Bible. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts," Isa. lv. 8, 9. This superiority of his thoughts to ours, causes a proportionable difference in his manner of operation. His ways are above our conceptions, and often contrary to them. He sometimes produces great effects by means which, to us, appear unsuitable and weak. Thus he gave Gideon a complete victory, not by providing him an army equal to that of the enemy, but by three hundred men furnished with earthen pitchers and lamps, Judges vii. 19, 20. At other times the greatness of his preparations intimates that there are difficulties in the case, insuperable to any power but his own, where our narrow apprehensions, until enlightened and enlarged by his teaching, can scarcely perceive any difficulty. It is eminently so with respect to the restoration of fallen man to his favour. We have but slight thoughts of his holiness, and therefore are but slightly affected by the evil of sin. But though he be rich in mercy, no wisdom but his own could have proposed an expedient whereby the exercise of his mercy towards sinners might be made to correspond with his justice and truth, and with the honour of his moral government. His gospel reveals this expedient, and points out a way in which mercy and truth meet together; and his inflexible righteousness is displayed in perfect harmony with the peace of sinners who submit to his appointment; and thus God appears not only gracious but just, in receiving them to favour. This is the greatest of all his works, and exhibits the most glorious discovery of his character and perfections. The means are answerable to the grandeur of the design, and are summarily expressed in my text.

I shall not take up your time in attempting to clear the difficulties which have been observed in the context. It may suffice for my purpose to affirm, that this passage expressly and exclusively refers to the Messiah, for which my warrant is the authority of the evangelists Matthew and Luke; (Matt. i. 23; Luke i. 31, 32;) who directly apply it to him, and assure us that it was accomplished in him. If sinners are to be saved, without injury to the honour of his law and government (and otherwise they must perish,) two things are necessary.

I. That a virgin shall conceive, and bring forth a son.

II. That this son of the virgin shall have a just right to be called Immanuel, God with us.

I. A virgin shall conceive, and bring forth a son. The Mediator, the surety for sinful men, must himself be a man. Because those whom he came to redeem were partakers of flesh and blood, he therefore took part of the same. Had not Messiah engaged for us, and appeared in our nature, a case would have occurred which I think we may warrantably deem incongruous to the divine wisdom. I mean, that while fire and hail, snow and vapour, and the stormy wind, fulfil the will of God, while the brutes are faithful to the instincts implanted in them by their Maker, a whole species of intelligent beings would have fallen short of the original law and design of their creation, and indeed have acted in direct and continual opposition to it. For the duty of man to love, serve, and trust God with all his heart and mind, and to love his neighbour as himself, is founded in the very nature and constitution of things, and necessarily results from his relation to God, and his absolute dependence on him as a creature. Such a disposition must undoubtedly have been as natural to man before his fall, as it is for a bird to fly, or a fish to swim. The prohibitory form of the law delivered to Israel from Mount Sinai, is a sufficient intimation that it was designed for sinners. Surely our first parents, while in a state of innocence, could not stand in need of warnings and threatening to restrain them from worshipping idols, or profaning the name of the great God whom they loved. Nor would it have been necessary to forbid murder, adultery, or injustice, if his posterity had continued under the law of their creation, the law of love. But the first act of disobedience degraded and disabled man, detached him from his proper centre, if I may so speak, and incapacitated him both for his duty and his happiness. After his fall, it became impossible for either Adam or his posterity to obey the law of God. But Messiah fulfilled it exactly, as a man, and the principles of it are renewed, by the power of his grace, in all who believe on him. And though their best

endeavours fall short, his obedience to it is accepted on their behalf, and he will at length perfectly restore them to their primitive order and honour. When they shall see him as he is, they will be like him, and all their powers and faculties will be perfectly conformed to his image.

Again, Messiah must not only be a man, but a partaker of our very nature. It had been equally easy to the power of God to have formed the body of the second Adam, as he formed the first, out of the dust of the earth. But though, in this way, he would have been a true and perfect man, he would not have been more nearly related to us than to the angels. Therefore, when God sent forth his Son to be made under the law, to redeem us from the curse of the law, that we might receive the adoption of children, (Gal. iv. 4, 5,) and be re-admitted into his happy family, he was made of a woman. Thus he became our Goel, our near kinsman, with whom the right of redemption lay.

But farther, if he had derived his human nature altogether in the ordinary way, from sinful parents, we see not how he could have avoided a participation in that defilement and depravity which the fall of Adam had entailed upon all his posterity. But his body, that holy thing, conceived and born of a virgin, was the immediate production of God. Therefore he was perfectly pure and spotless, and qualified to be such a high priest as became us, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners; (Heb. vii. 26;) who needed not, as the typical high-priests of Israel, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sin, and then for the sins of the people, Heb. vii. 27. These difficulties were obviated by a virgin's conceiving and bearing a son. His obedience was without defect, his nature without blemish, and, having no sin of his own, when he voluntarily offered himself to make an atonement for the sins of his people, his sacrifice was, so far, answerable to the strict and extensive demands of the law and justice of God.

Let us make a solemn pause, and call upon our souls to admire and adore the wisdom and power of God in this appointment. Thus the Lord created a new thing upon the earth!

II. But surely our admiration and gratitude will be raised still higher, if we rightly understand the latter part of my text. This son of the virgin shall be called Immannel, God with us. Though the human nature of Christ was absolutely perfect, his obedience commensurate to the utmost extent of the law, and his substitution and sufferings for sinners voluntary, yet, had he been no more than a man, he would not have been equal to the great undertaking of saving sinners. A due consideration of the majesty, holiness, authority, and goodness of God will make sin appear to be, as the apostle expresses it, exceedingly sinful, Rom. vii. 13. Whoever has a right sense of the nature and effects of that rebellion against the Most High, which the scripture intends by the term sin, will not need many arguments to convince him that the Mediator between God and man must be possessed of such dignity and power as cannot be attributed to a creature without destroying the idea of a created and dependent being, by ascribing to him those perfections which are incommunicably divine.

If Messiah had been a sinless and perfect man, and no more, he might have yielded a complete obedience to the will of God, but it could have been only for himself. The most excellent and exalted creature cannot exceed the law of his creation. As a creature, he is bound to serve God with his all, and his obligations will always be equal to his ability. But an obedience acceptable and available for others, for thousands and millions, for all who are willing to plead it, must be connected with a nature which is not thus necessarily bound. A sinner, truly convinced of his obnoxiousness to the displeasure of God, must sink into despair, notwithstanding the intimation of a Saviour, if he were not assured by the scripture that it was a divine person in the human nature who engaged for us. It is this alone affords a solid ground for hope, to know that he who was before all, by whom all things were made, and by whom they consist, assumed the nature of man; that the great Lawgiver himself submitted to be under his own law. This wonderful condescension gave an immense value and dignity to all that he did, to all that he suffered: thus he not only satisfied but honoured the law. So that we may, without hesitation, affirm, that the law of God was more honoured by Messiah, in his obedience to it, during the few years of his residence upon earth, and terminated by his last and highest act of obedience in submitting to the death of the cross, than it could have been by the unsinning obedience of all mankind to the end of time.

But Messiah was not only to obey the law for us, but he was likewise to expiate, to sustain, and to exhaust the curse due to sin, Gal. iii. 13. In this attempt, no mere creature could have endured. Nor could the sufferings of a creature have been proposed to the universe, to angels, and men, as a consideration sufficient to vindicate the righteousness and truth of God in the remission of sin, after he had determined and solemnly declared that the wages of sin is death. The apostle assures us that it is impossible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sin, Heb. x. 4. They who differ from the apostle in their judgment, who think it very possible for God, if he pleased, to forgive the sinner who should offer a bull or a goat, or even

without any offering, by the sovereign exercise of his mercy, may be reminded that the question is not simply what God can do, but what it becomes him to do, agreeable to his perfections, and to his character as governor of the world. Of this his infinite wisdom is the only competent judge; and we learn from his word, that it is impossible any blood, but that of his own Son, can cleanse us from guilt, or save us from misery. The blood of a bull or a goat, of a man or an angel, (if angels could bleed,) are all equally insufficient to the great purpose of declaring his righteousness, of manifesting to all intelligent creatures his inflexible displeasure against sin, in the very act of affording mercy to sinners. But since the atoning blood is the blood of Immanuel, of him who is God with us; the sinner who makes it his plea, builds his hope upon a rock which cannot be removed; and obtaining forgiveness in this way, he likewise obtains by it such a knowledge of the heinousness of sin, as disposes him from that hour to fear, hate, and forsake it.

But though forgiveness be an essential part of salvation, it is not the whole. We cannot be happy, except the power of sin be likewise destroyed. A well-grounded hope in the mercy of God, is connected with a thirst for sanctification, and a conformity to his image. But neither this hope nor this desire is natural to us. Our case requires the help of an almighty arm, of the power which can cause the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the dead to arise; which can take away the heart of stone, and create a heart of flesh. So likewise the difficulties attendant on our christian profession, arising from the spirit of the world around us, the snares to which we are exposed in every situation, our weakness, the deceitfulness of our hearts, the subtilty, vigilance, and power of our spiritual enemies, are so many and great, that unless he, on whom we depend for salvation, be able to save to the uttermost, we can have no security, either for our progress, or our perseverance, in the grace of God. Unless the Saviour of sinners be omnipresent, omniscient, unchangeable, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;" that is, unless he be God, how can he answer the prayers, satisfy the wants, and relieve the distresses of all who trust in him in every age, and of all who in every place equally need his support at the same moment! Or how can he engage to give rest to every weary soul, to secure them from perishing, and to bestow upon them eternal life? David comfortably concluded, that because the Lord was his shepherd, he should not want, and had no reason to fear, (Psalm xxiii. 1, 4,) not even when passing through the valley of the shadow of death. To us Jesus is made known as the great shepherd of the sheep; but how can we place the like confidence in him, unless we likewise are assured that our shepherd is the Lord?

I shall not attempt to vindicate this doctrine largely from the exceptions of those who call themselves men of reason. It is a point of revelation, and it is expressly revealed. It demands our assent upon the authority of God, who requires us to receive this record which he has given us of his Son. Thus far it approves itself to our reason, that however difficult it may be to our conceptions, yet thus it must be, upon a suppesition that sinners can be saved without prejudice to the honour of the divine government. If we affirm, that he who was born in a stable, and suffered as a malefactor upon Mount Calvary, is the true God and eternal life, many will think it a hard saying. But it is the doctrine of scripture, the very pillar and ground of truth; the only foundation of hope for an awakened conscience, the only standard by which we can properly estimate the evil of sin, the worth of the soul, and the love of God. We do not, however, say, that the human nature of Christ, considered in itself, possesses the attributes of Deity, or is the proper object of worship; nor do we suppose that God could suffer, bleed, or die. But we say with the apostle, "that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself," 2 Cor. v. 19. We believe that the human nature was so intimately and indissolubly united to the divine, that the properties and actings of each nature are justly ascribed to the one person of Christ, God-man, Immanuel, God with us. Thus we read that the final judgment of the world is committed to a *man*, and that God hath purchased his church with his *own blood*, Acts xvii. 31; xx. 28.

Behold then the character of Messiah in this prophecy! a man! a God! a divine person in the human nature! God manifested in the flesh! Immanuel, God with us!

As fallen creatures, we had lost the true knowledge of God, and were unable to form such conceptions of his greatness and goodness, as are necessary to inspire us with reverence, to engage our confidence, or produce obedience to his will. His glory shines in the heavens and fills the earth; we are surrounded by the tokens of his power and presence; yet, till we are instructed by his word, and enlightened by his Holy Spirit, he is to us an unknown God. The prevalence of idolatry was early, and (with an exception to the people of Israel) soon became universal. Men who boasted of their reason, worshipped the sun and moon, yea, the works of their own hands, instead of the Creator. And even where revelation is vouchsafed, the bulk of mankind live without God in the world. But he is known, trusted, and served, by those who know Messiah. To them his glory is displayed in the person of Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. iv. 6. His agency is perceived in the

creation, his providence is acknowledged, and his presence felt as God with us.

As fallen creatures, God is against us, and we are against him. The alienation of our hearts is the great cause of our ignorance of him. We are willingly ignorant. The thoughts of him are unwelcome to us, and we do not like to retain him in our knowledge. Guilt is the parent of atheism. A secret foreboding, that if there be a God, we are obnoxious to his displeasure; and that if he takes cognizance of our conduct, we have nothing to hope, but every thing to fear from him, constrains many persons to try to persuade themselves that there is no God; and many more to think, or at least to wish, that if there be a God, he does not concern himself with human affairs. What a proof is this of the enmity of the heart of man against him; that so many persons who would tremble at the thought of being in a ship, driven by the winds and waves, without compass or pilot, should yet think it desirable, if it were possible, to be assured, that in a world like this, so full of uncertainty, trouble, and change, all things were left at random, without the interference of a supreme governor! But this enmity, these dark apprehensions, are removed, when the gospel is received by faith. For it brings us the welcome news, that there is forgiveness with him; that God is reconciled in his Son to all who seek his mercy. In this sense, likewise, Messiah is Immanuel, God with us, on our side, no longer the avenger of sin, but the author of salvation.

Immanuel is God with us, God in our nature still. He suffered as a man, and as a man he now reigns on the throne of glory; exercising all power and authority, and receiving all spiritual worship both in heaven and upon earth. He is the head of all principalities and powers, thrones and dominions. Thus man is not only saved, but unspeakably honoured and ennobled. He is brought into the nearest relation to him, who is over all blessed for ever. The angels adore him; only redeemed sinners can say, "He loved us, and gave himself for us; he has washed us from our sins in his own blood;" (Gal. ii. 20; Rev. i. 5;) he is our Saviour, our shepherd, our Immanuel, God with us.

I shall conclude with a few obvious reflections which offer from this important subject.

1. What a cold assent is paid to the doctrine of the Godhead of Christ by many who profess and receive it as a truth! They have received from education, from books or ministers, what is called an orthodox scheme of religious sentiments, and with this they are contented. They have not been accustomed to doubt of it, and therefore take it for granted that they really believe it. But as I have already hinted, it is so contrary to our natural apprehensions, that no man can, from his heart, say that Jesus Christ is Lord, unless he be taught of God. And a cordial belief of this point will and must produce great and abiding effects. They who know the Saviour's name, will so trust in him, as to renounce every other ground of confidence. They will love him supremely, and forsake every thing that stands in competition with his favour. They will glory in his cross, they will espouse his cause, and devote themselves to his service. They will make continual application to him, that they may receive out of his fulness grace according to their need. They will obey his precepts, and walk in his Spirit. Happy were it, indeed, if all who join in repeating the Creed, and who bow their knee at the mention of his name, were thus minded. But the lives, tempers, and pursuits of thousands, give too sure an evidence, that when they express their assent with their lips, they neither know what they say, nor whereof they affirm. Their acknowledgment of his character, has no more salutary influence, than that of the evil spirits when he was upon earth, who said, and perhaps with a much fuller conviction, "We know thee who thou art, the holy one of God," Mark i. 24.

2. What a strong foundation does this doctrine afford for the faith and hope of those who indeed know Messiah, and have put their trust in him! This truth is the rock upon which the church is built, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. "If God be for us, who shall be against us?" The difficulties of our warfare are great, the enemies of our peace are many. The world may frown, and Satan will rage, but Jesus has overcome the world, and is greater than all our foes. He will guide his people with his unerring wisdom, support them with his almighty arm, supply them out of the inexhaustible riches of his grace, revive them when fainting, heal them when wounded, plead for them above as their great high priest, manage for them upon earth as their great shepherd, and at last make them more than conquerors, and give them a crown of life.

3. On the contrary, how dreadful must be the state of those who finally reject him, and say in their hearts, "We will not have this man to rule over us!" He is now proposed as a Saviour, he invites sinners to come to him, that they may have life, and assures us, "that him that cometh he will in nowise cast out," John vi. 37. Happy are they who hear and obey his voice to-day, while it is called to-day. To-morrow is uncertain. Death may be at the door, and at death our state will be determined for eternity. They who refuse him now, in the character of a Saviour, must then appear at his tribunal, and stand before him as their Judge; and must answer, in their own persons, for all their transgressions of the holy law, and for their contempt of the gospel of the grace of God.

SERMON VI.

SALVATION PUBLISHED FROM THE MOUNTAINS.

O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountains: O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength, lift it up, be not afraid: say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!—Isaiah xl. 9.

It would be improper to propose an alteration, though a slight one, in the reading of a text, without bearing my testimony to the great value of our English version, which I believe, in point of simplicity, strength, and fidelity is not likely to be excelled by a new translation of the whole scriptures. But there are undoubtedly particular passages where a small change in the expression might render the sense clearer, and be equally answerable to the original Hebrew or Greek. The address of this verse as it stands in the Messiah is, "O thou that tellest good tidings," &c. as the Bishop of London has lately translated it. Zion and Jerusalem are considered by the prophet, not as bringing, but as receiving good tidings; and the publisher of these good tidings is written with a feminine construction. The sense may be thus expressed, "Let her that bringeth good tidings to Jerusalem and Zion, get up into the high mountains and lift up her voice." But the apostrophe is more animated. That it was the custom in Israel for the women to publish and celebrate good news with songs and instruments is well known. We have an early instance in the book of Exodus. When the Lord had delivered them from the power of Pharaoh, and they saw their enemies, who had so lately threatened them, dead upon the sea shore, Miriam, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances; and Miriam answered them, "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea," Exod. xv. 20, 21. So afterwards, when David returned from the slaughter of the Philistines, the women came out to meet him and Saul, with tabrets and instruments of music; and they answered one another as they played, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands," 1 Sam. xviii. 6, 7. Thus likewise Deborah, in her sublime song, represents the mother of Sisera (Judges v. 28, 29) and her women singing alternately, from a confident, though vain expectation, that Sisera would return a conqueror. In my text, the prophet, in prospect of Messiah's appearance, speaks of it as an event suited to excite a general joy. The gospel (as the word imports) is good news, glad tidings indeed! the best news that ever reached the ears, or cheered the heart of man. The women are therefore called upon to proclaim his approach, on the tops of the hills and mountains, from whence they may be seen and heard to the greatest advantage, for the spreading of the tidings throughout the whole country. Zion is as a besieged city, but let her know that relief is at hand; say unto her, "Behold your God!" The Lord God will come with a strong hand, or against the strong one, and his people shall know him as their shepherd, full of care, kindness, and power.

The promise of Immanuel, God with us, is now to be spread like the morning from the tops of the mountains. The day is breaking, and this passage prepares for the following, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come!" The welcome news is to be dispersed from Jerusalem to Samaria, from Jew to Gentile, from one kingdom to another people, till all the nations and ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God, Psalm xcviii. 3.

The cause of this exultation arises from the character of Messiah, compared with the design of his appearance, and this is answerable to the condition in which he finds mankind.

The deplorable state of fallen man by nature is largely described both in the Old Testament and in the New. It may suffice to take notice of three principal features which characterise our whole species, and apply to every individual of the race of Adam, until the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, affords relief. These are guilt, alienation of heart, and misery.

I. Guilt.—All have sinned. We are the creatures of God. He made us, and he preserves us. Our life, faculties, and comforts are all from him. He is therefore our great Lord, our supreme benefactor. Of course we belong to him. His we are, and not our own. It follows, that dependence, gratitude, submission, and obedience are incumbent on us, as they must be upon all intelligent creatures, from the very nature of things. The relation which subsists between an infinitely wise and good Creator and his creatures, if capable of knowing him, necessarily implies this subjection; and the obligation is indissoluble. But we have evidently broken this law of our creation. We have violated the order of God's government. We have implicitly, if not formally, renounced our allegiance, disowned his right over us, and set up for ourselves. A dependent creature affecting independence; a worm presuming upon its own power, making itself its own end; a rebel against the divine government, boasting of morality and goodness, and trusting to his own conduct to recommend him to the favour of his Maker; a being formed for immortality, proposing his whole happiness in things which he feels to be unsatisfying, knows to be uncertain, and from which he is conscious he must, in a few years at most, be

finally removed: these are solecisms which strongly prove the depravity, degeneracy, and demerit of man. It is possible that, had we been wholly left to ourselves, we should never have been aware, while in this world, of the just and inevitable consequences of our rebellion. Having lost all right thoughts of God, and conceiving of him, as if he were altogether like ourselves, we might have felt neither fear nor remorse. But there is a revelation, by which we are informed of his determined purpose to avenge disobedience, and to vindicate the honour of his government; and we are assured that he is not an indifferent spectator of our opposition to his established order. His justice and truth are engaged to punish transgressors, and our obnoxiousness to punishment is what we mean by guilt. If the scripture be true there is no way of escape, unless he himself be pleased to appoint one. This he has done, and the declaration of this appointment is a part of the good tidings contained in my text. Proclaim it from the tops of the mountains that there is forgiveness with him. Say unto Jerusalem, Behold Messiah! Behold your God! He comes to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, Heb. ix. 26. He can do it, for he is God; and he will do it, for he has taken on him our nature for this very purpose, 2 Cor. v. 21. Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world!

2. Alienation of mind.—Not only is it true that we have sinned against the Lord, but a principle of aversion from him is deeply rooted in our hearts. Therefore one part of our natural character is, haters of God, Rom. i. 30. This is thought a hard saying. Many who will admit that their conduct is blameable, and that they are not altogether what they ought to be, will by no means plead guilty to this charge. If they fall short of their duty, and in some instances transgress his commandments, they say it is their infirmity, they are sorry, and hope to do better some time or other. However, they are willing to think that their hearts are tolerably good, they mean well, and are shocked at the idea of hating God. They rather presume that they love him, though they are not so careful to please him as they should be. I do not assert that we hate God under that character which our vain imaginations form of him. If we can persuade ourselves, in direct contradiction to the testimony of scripture, that he is not strict to mark what is amiss; that he will dispense with the strictness of his law; that he will surely have mercy upon us, because we are not openly abandoned and profligate in our conduct; that he will accept of lip-worship, in which the heart has no concern, reward us for actions in which we had no intention of pleasing him, permit us to love and serve the world with all our mind, and soul, and strength, while we live, and make us happy in another world, when we can live in this no longer. If we form such an image of God, it is too much like our own to provoke our enmity, for it is destitute of holiness, justice, and truth. But the carnal mind is and must be enmity against God, (Rom. viii. 7,) according to the character he has given of himself in his word. We have an inbred dislike to all his moral attributes, to the rule of his government, and to the methods of his grace. We cannot, that is, we will not propose either his glory as our chief end, or his favour as our chief good. The proof is plain. The ends which we actually pursue and the supposed good which we deliberately prefer, are utterly inconsistent with the plan which he has prescribed for us. His ways, though truly pleasant in themselves, appear unpleasing to us, and we think we can plan better for ourselves. We do not like to retain God in our thoughts, (Rom. i. 28,) which is a sure sign of enmity. Nay, this enmity is so strong in us naturally that we cannot bear others should think more highly of God than we do, or be more attached to him than we are. This was the ground of the first murder. Abel loved God, and God was pleased to testify his approbation of Abel, and therefore Cain killed him, 1 John iii. 12. This has been the great cause of the opposition and ill-treatment which the servants of God have met with from the men of the world in all succeeding ages; a cause which still subsists, and will continue to operate upon posterity yet unborn. Can we show a stronger mark of dislike to a person than by hating all who profess a regard to him, and when that is the only cause of our resentment! Such is the prevailing enmity against God. For how often do we see, that, when his grace enables a sinner to forsake the spirit and practice of the world, his former friends are immediately offended, and perhaps those of his own household become his inveterate enemies!

But, O thou that bringest good tidings lift up thy voice! Say to poor sinners, Behold your God! He comes to take this enmity away! The cross of Christ subdues it, when every other expedient has been found ineffectual. The heart, too hard to be softened by a profusion of temporal benefits, and too stout to be subdued by afflictions, is melted by the dying love of a Saviour, and by that discovery of the divine perfections which is exhibited in redemption. We have a striking instance of this effect, in the case of Saul of Tarsus, Acts ix. 1—20. His misguided conscience, under the influence of prejudice, persuaded him, that he ought to do many things against Jesus of Nazareth. Instigated with rage, and not satisfied with the injuries he had offered to his disciples at Jerusalem, but still breathing out threatenings and slaughter, he journeyed towards Damascus, designing to

harass and persecute them wherever he found them. In this temper of mind, he was suddenly arrested on his way, by a light, and a voice from heaven. He fell to the ground. But Jesus, whom he had ignorantly persecuted, instructed him in the knowledge of his person and love, pardoned his sin, and commissioned him to preach the faith he had laboured to destroy. How sudden, how evident, how abiding was the change which then took place in his heart and in his conduct! From that moment he accounted "all things loss and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord," Phil. iii. 8. Unwearied by labour and hardship, undismayed by opposition and danger, he spent the remainder of his life in the cause of his Master; and like Cæsar, accounting nothing done while any thing remained to do, his active and intrepid spirit was continually meditating new services, Acts xix. 21. And, though he knew that bonds and afflictions awaited him in every place, he was always upon the wing to publish to his fellow-sinners the grace and glory of him whom he had so long opposed, only because he knew him not. And although the circumstances attending the apostle's case were extraordinary, the case itself, as to the substance, is not singular. I trust many persons in this assembly have been the subjects of a like change. The doctrine which Paul preached, has enlightened your understandings, has inspired you with hopes and desires to which you were once strangers, and given a new direction to the conduct and aims of your life. You were once afar off from God, but you are now brought nigh by the blood of Christ. You once lived to yourselves, but now you feel that you are no longer your own, and have devoted yourselves to him who died to save you from the present evil world, and from the wrath to come.

3. Misery.—If we are guilty in the sight of God, and alienated from him in our hearts, we must be miserable. Guilt entails a burden, and a foreboding of evil upon the conscience. And our alienation from the fountain of living waters, (Jer. ii. 13,) compels us (for we are insufficient to our own happiness) to seek our resources from broken cisterns, and pits which will hold no water. Farther, sin has filled the world with woe. The whole creation travails and groans; and natural evil is inseparable from moral, as the shadow from the body. Though the earth be filled with tokens of the goodness, patience, and forbearance of God, it likewise abounds with marks of his displeasure. I think we have sufficient reason to attribute earthquakes, hurricanes, famine, and pestilence, to sin as their original and proper cause. We can hardly conceive, that if mankind had continued in that happy state of love and obedience to God, in which our first parents were created, they would have been exposed to such calamities. When God at the beginning, surveyed every thing that he had made, "behold it was very good," Gen. i. 31. All was beauty and harmony, till sin introduced disorder and a curse. But far worse than what we suffer immediately from the providence of God, are the evils which we bring upon ourselves and upon each other. The dreadful consequences of war, rapine, discord, hatred, ambition, avarice, and intemperance, furnish part of every page in the mournful history of human life, and are felt in every nation, city, village, and family. Want, cares, and diseases, prey upon individuals. Disappointment, dissatisfaction, vanity, and vexation of spirit, are experienced by persons of every rank, and in every stage of human life. How much more desirable would it be, were it not for the hope of the gospel, to share with the brute creation, than to bear the name of man in his fallen state! The brutes have few wants; their propensities and the means of gratifying them, are suited to their natures, adapted to their powers, and conducive to the preservation of the species. They neither regret the past, nor tremble under apprehensions of the future. It is far otherwise with man. His boasted pleasures end with a sting, and often he cannot bear his own reflections on them. He suffers almost as much from imaginary fears, as from real afflictions. The more he possesses, the more are the sources of his anxieties multiplied and enlarged. And after having been long wearied with a train of mortifications, pains, and inquietudes, he must at last, however unwilling, yield to that stroke of death, the thought of which, when strongly realized to his mind, was always sufficient to embitter the happiest hours of his life.

But publish the glad tidings from the mountains, and let the joyful sound diffuse over the plain. Your God cometh! Messiah establishes a new, a spiritual kingdom upon the earth, and his happy subjects are freed from the misery in which they were involved. They commit all their concerns to him, and he manages for them. Their fears are removed, their irregular desires corrected, and all that is really good for them, is secured to them by his love, promise, and care. Afflictions still await them, but they are sanctified. To them the nature of affliction is changed. They are appointments graciously designed for their advantage. Their crosses, no less than their comforts, are tokens of God's favour; (Heb. xii. 6, 7;) they have them only because their present situation requires discipline, and they could not be so well without them. They are assured of support under them, (2 Cor. xii. 9,) and a final deliverance out of them all: for there is a happy hour approaching, when all their troubles shall cease, and they shall enter

upon a state of eternal, uninterrupted, inconceivable joy, Isa. lx. 20; Rev. xxi. 4.

For these purposes the Son of God was revealed. The prophets saw his day afar off, and proclaimed his approach.—Thy God cometh! Though truly a man, he is truly God. Neither man nor angel could remove our guilt, communicate to us a spiritual life, relieve us from misery, and give us stable peace in a changing world, hope and triumph in death, and eternal life beyond it. But his wisdom and power are infinite, and his purpose unchangeable. He would not have invited the weary and heavy laden to come to him, if he was not able and determined to give them rest. None that seek him are disappointed, or sent empty away: a sufficient proof that his compassion, his bounty, his fulness are properly divine. Therefore the apostle, speaking of the riches of his grace, uses the epithet, "unsearchable," Ephes. iii. 8. His treasury of life and salvation is inexhaustible, like a boundless, shoreless, bottomless ocean; like the sun, which having cheered the successive generations of mankind with his beams, still shines with undiminished lustre, is still the fountain of light, and has always a sufficiency to fill innumerable millions of eyes in the same instant.

Does the language of my text cause joy to spring up in your hearts! or is it nothing to you? If you heard the Messiah, you were, perhaps, affected by the music of the passage; how much are you to be pitied, if you were hitherto unaffected by the sentiment! Yet once more, hear,—Thy God cometh! He did come in the fulness of time, according to the prophecy, and the word of prophecy assures us that he will come again. "Behold he cometh in the clouds: and every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him," Rev. i. 7.—Prepare to meet thy God, Amos iv. 12.

SERMON VII.

THE MORNING LIGHT.

Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee: and the Gentiles shall come to thy light and kings to the brightness of thy rising.—Isaiah lx. 1—3.

One strong internal proof that the Bible is a divine revelation, may be drawn from the subject-matter, and particularly that it is the book, and the only book, which teaches us to think highly and honourably of God. I say, the only book, for there is no right knowledge of God where the is not known. What is the Jupiter of Homer, compared with the God of Israel, as he is represented to us by his servants the prophets? And if the heathen philosophers, in some detached passages, have sentiments not altogether unworthy of him, history honestly tells us how they obtained them. They travelled, and they are generally said to have travelled into Phœnicia or Egypt, to the confines of that people who alone thought rightly of God, because to them only he had made himself known by a revelation. If such a description as we have in the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, from the twelfth verse to the end, had been known only of late years, recovered, we will suppose, out of the ruins of Herculaneum, there is little doubt but it would have engaged the attention and admiration of the learned world. For the most admired writings of antiquity, upon a candid comparison, are unspeakably inferior to it. The inimitable sublimity of the prophets is natural, just, and unforced, and flows from the grandeur of their subjects, because they were influenced by him who alone can speak worthily of himself.

> A song so vast, a theme so high,
> Calls for the voice that tuned the sky.

With them, the whole compass of the creation is but as dust upon the balance, in respect of the great Creator. His purpose is fate, his voice is power. He speaks and it is done. Thus he called the universe into being; and thus, as the great Lord and proprietor of all, he still maintains and governs it, directing the frame of nature, and every particular event and contingence, to the promoting of his own glory, the last and highest end of all his works.

The principal of these is, the exhibition of his perfections in the person of his Son. The prophecies we have already considered announce this event, with a gradual increase of clearness and precision, as the period of accomplishment is supposed to draw nigh. We lately heard the command to proclaim his approach from the hills and the tops of the mountains. Here the prophet begins to contemplate the effects of his actual appearance. The earth is considered as involved in a state of gross darkness, but the sun, the Sun of righteousness is about to arise, and to fill it by his beams, with light, life, and glory. These effects, indeed, will not extend to all, for many will love darkness rather than light. But he will not shine in vain. There will be a people prepared to receive him, and to rejoice in his light. They shall arise as from sleep, as from the grave, and his light reflected upon them shall cause them to shine likewise. Darkness shall still cover those who reject him; yea, their darkness will be increased. But the glory of the Lord shall be seen upon all who believe, and their numbers, from age to age, shall be enlarged. Nations shall come to him, and kings shall

be subservient to the spreading of his kingdom. Such is the scope of the passage before us. I shall briefly consider a few of the leading particulars contained in it.

I. As the sun is the source of light to the natural world, so is Messiah to the moral and spiritual world. Light, and its opposite, darkness, are figuratively used in scripture. The latter is applied to a state of ignorance, sin, and misery, as in the following texts. "He that walketh in darkness, knoweth not whither he goeth," John xii. 35. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth," 1 John i. 6. "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," Matth. xxv. 30. The former, therefore, signifies true knowledge, holiness, and happiness. "Ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of the light," Eph. v. 8. "When I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me," Micah vii. 8. "Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart," Psalm xcvii. 11. I select but one instance of each kind; an attentive reader of the scriptures will meet with many expressions of a like import. But there is likewise an intermediate state; light advancing from the early dawn to the perfect day. This twilight, no less than day-light is from the sun. Such was the state of the Old Testament church. Messiah was the source of their knowledge, hope, and joy; but he was (if I may so speak) below the horizon as to them. Though believers under that dispensation were a people saved of the Lord, they were trained up under types and shadows, were influenced by a spirit of comparative bondage and distance, like children under age, and rather longed for than actually possessed the gracious liberty which the children of God enjoy under the gospel. But the sun arose, and the shadows vanished, when the Son of God incarnate dwelt and conversed with men, honoured his temple with his personal presence, and superseded all the Levitical sacrifices, by the one offering of himself upon the cross. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." But more especially we date the beginning of his visible kingdom from the day of Pentecost, which followed his ascension. Then he signally bestowed the gifts which, as mediator, he had received for men, and, by the power of his Holy Spirit, authorized and qualified his servants to go forth and preach salvation in his name. Then the partition-wall between Jew and Gentile was taken away, and his righteousness was openly shown in the sight of the Heathen. Abraham, Moses, Elijah, and other servants of God, had been highly favoured and highly honoured; but we are assured by our Lord himself, that none born of woman had been greater than John his forerunner—and yet he added, "the least in the kingdom of heaven," that is, in the New Testament or gospel-church, "is greater than he," Matth. xi. 11. The apostles were happy in the peculiar privilege of attending on his person, yet he told them, "it is expedient for you that I go away," John xvi. 7. There were still greater privileges depending upon the influence of the promised Comforter, who was to abide with the church for ever. By the power of his Holy Spirit, the Lord is now present with all his ministers and people in every place, whether retired in secret from the view of men, or assembled together in his name; (Matth. vi. 6, xviii. 20, xxviii. 20;) and though the great events upon which their hopes are founded, his life, passion, death, resurrection, and ascension took place long ago, he so realizes the declaration of them in his word to their hearts, that they are no less assured of what they read than the apostles, who saw him with their own eyes. Thus the gospel-state is a dispensation of light. The Sun is risen with life and healing in his beams, and they who have the eyes of their understanding opened, enjoy a bright and marvellous day. They see, admire, adore, rejoice, and love.

II. The subjects of Messiah's kingdom, the living members of his church, are so irradiated by him that they shine likewise, as the moon shines, but with a borrowed light derived from the sun. Beholding, in this glass, the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same image from glory to glory, (2 Cor. iii. 18,) according to the measure and growth of their faith. Two points may be observed under this head.

1. The fact that they do thus shine. Though they were once darkness, they are now light, Eph. v. 8. A dark, ignorant, wicked, selfish christian is a contradiction in terms. There may be such, there are too many such, amongst those who make a profession of the name of Christ; but they who truly know him walk in the light, as he is in the light. They have knowledge, a good understanding, Psalm cxi. 10. Perhaps the greater part of real christians have little acquaintance with the literature and science of the world: their moral capacities may be weak, and not improved by education; they may be in the esteem of men, as they are in their own, but babes; yet they know more than the wisest philosophers who are destitute of the grace of God. They know themselves, they know the Lord, they know the evil of sin, and the way of salvation; what their proper happiness consists in, and how it is to be obtained. They have learned to endure affliction, to forgive injuries, and to overcome evil with good. They have attained a just sense of the vanity of the world and the importance of eternity. They are instructed to be contented and use-

ful in their stations, to discharge their duties in relative life with propriety, and to meet death with comfort. In all these particulars, many who have dazzling talents, and are celebrated for abilities and endowments, are miserably at a loss. True believers are conformed to the spirit and temper of their Saviour, and therefore are different and distinguished from the world around them. And they have, at least, the beginnings of true peace and solid happiness, in communion with him whom they serve.

2. The cause.—They shine wholly by his light. If their own words may be taken, the proof of this is easy. They are free to confess that they are wise only by his wisdom, strong by his power working in them, and that without him they have not sufficiency to think a good thought, 2 Cor. iii. 5. Experience has taught them that they cannot stand unless he upholds them, nor watch unless he watcheth with them, nor be safe or happy a single day without fresh communications from him. But this their experience and acknowledgment is the express and current doctrine of scripture. There is a real, though mystical union between Christ and his people. He is the vine, (John xv. 1,) they the branches: he is their head, they the members of his body. They dwell in him by faith, he dwells in them by his Spirit. He is their root and their life; all their springs are in him, and it is out of his fulness that they receive, John i. 16. Therefore the apostle says, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me;" (Gal. ii. 20;) "I can do all things through Christ strengthening me," 2 Cor. xii. 9. And our Lord himself, who comforted Paul with that promise, "My grace is sufficient for thee," apprised all his followers of their entire dependence upon him, by saying, "Without me ye can do nothing," John xv. 5. The language of the Old Testament is to the same purport. "They looked unto him and were enlightened," Psalm xxxiv. 5. "In the Lord Jehovah I have righteousness and strength," Isaiah xlv. 24. "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength," Isaiah xl. 29. Thus things are constituted and conducted, that no flesh should glory in his presence, but that he who glorieth may glory in the Lord, 1 Cor. i. 29—31.

III. They who wilfully refuse and turn from this light, do thereby involve themselves in double darkness, and become more infatuated and wicked than those to whom the light has not been proposed. Their evils, likewise, are more aggravated than they would have been if the light had not visited them. Thus our Lord Messiah speaks of the Jews, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin," John xv. 22. And again, "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see, and they which see might be made blind," John ix. 39. He came to make the ignorant wise unto salvation; but they who, from a proud conceit of their own wisdom and sufficiency, disdain his instruction, being left to themselves, give abundant evidence that the light they boast of is but gross and palpable darkness. The grossest errors, the greatest obduracy of heart, the most extreme profaneness of spirit, and the most abominable wickedness in practice, may be expected, and will certainly be found where the gospel is despised.

It is evident, that the morality which is so highly admired by the christian world, and set in opposition to the gospel of Christ, is much leaner and more scanty than the morality of the Heathens. I speak of the idea only; for neither have the Heathens of old, nor of the present day, acted up to their own rules. But I do not hesitate to affirm, that none of our modern moralists who have disowned the gospel revelation, have given us a system of morality equal to that of Tully the Pagan. Many of the Heathens acknowledged the desirableness and necessity of revelation; though infidels, born in a christian land, think it a high mark of their wisdom to despise it; and avowed atheists, that is, men who deny either the being or the providence of God, or the obligations mankind are under to obey him, are seldom to be met with but in countries where the Bible is known. The heart must have obstinately and repeatedly resisted light and conviction, before it can ordinarily proceed to these dreadful lengths. But while the blind stumble in the noon of day, Messiah's people shall walk in confidence and peace, (Psalm lxxxix. 15, 16,) and shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, Phil. ii. 15.

IV. The third verse of this chapter foretells, and therefore secures, the conversion of the Gentiles or Heathens. The times and the seasons are in the disposal of God, but the scriptures must be fulfilled. Much was done in the first age of christianity. A single instrument, the apostle Paul, as he himself informs us, preached the faith, which he formerly laboured to destroy, "from Jerusalem round about to Illyricum," (Rom. xv. 19,) and probably much farther afterwards. And the Lord, who appointed him to this service, accompanied his message with his own power; so that he had signal success, in turning men from darkness to light, and from the worship of dumb idols, to serve the living and true God; and in planting the gospel, and gathering churches in every province. The gospel found an early reception at Rome, which facilitated its spread into the different parts of the Roman empire. And we have reason to believe it was introduced into our island in a few years after our Lord's ascension. And

though what was called the conversion of heathen nations in some following ages, went little farther than to prevail on them to assume the name of Christians, and left them considered as nations, as destitute of the spirit and blessings of christianity as it found them; yet I cannot doubt, that wherever the New Testament, and the sufferings of Messiah were known, some individuals at least experienced a real and saving change. And we are warranted to hope for still greater things; for a time when the gross darkness, which as yet covers a great part of the world, shall be dispelled; and the Redeemer's kingdom, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, as a stone cut out without hands, shall become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth, Dan. ii. 35. But this pleasing subject will come more directly under our consideration hereafter.

V. The call in my text may be taken in a general sense, like that of the apostle, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light," Eph. v. 14. Natural light requires eyes to perceive it. It would be absurd to point out the beauties of an extensive prospect to a blind man. To him the face of nature presents only a universal blank. But the light of the gospel not only discovers the most important objects to those who can see, but has a marvellous efficacy to open the eyes of the blind. It is the appointed instrument of divine power for this purpose. In vain would be the labour and expectation of the husbandman, if God did not afford the rain, and the snow, to water the earth, and the enlivening influences of the sun, to draw forth the tender blade, and to ripen the corn. Equally unsuccessful would the preaching of the gospel prove to sinful men, though in itself it be eminently the truth and wisdom of God, exactly suited to their state, and of the highest importance to their welfare, if he had not promised that his word, where simply and faithfully delivered in dependence upon his blessing, shall not be spoken in vain, but shall certainly accomplish the end for which he has sent it, Is. lv. 10, 11. This promise, together with the experience of its truth in our own case, and our knowledge of its uniform effects in every age and country where the doctrine of the cross has been preached, encourages ministers to persevere in publishing the glad tidings, in defiance of all the opposition and disappointments we meet with. We lament, but cannot wonder, that the gospel is so generally neglected. As a dispensation of grace, it offends the pride of man, as a dispensation of holiness, it contradicts his desires and passions. His spirit is degraded, his heart is pre-engaged, he loves the present world, and has no more taste or inclination for a life of communion with God here, and such a heaven as the scriptures propose hereafter, than the beasts of the field. But the Lord has said, "I will work, and who shall let it?" Is. xliii. 13. When he is pleased to clothe the word preached with the influences of his Holy Spirit, and to apply it to the conscience, it is quick, powerful, penetrating, and irresistible as lightning; it conveys a voice, which the deaf, yea, the dead, must hear: it forces a light upon the mind which cannot be evaded. Then things are seen as they are. The nature and desert of sin is apprehended, and then the gospel is found to be the only balm for a distressed and wounded conscience. Therefore, having the Lord's command and promise, we are not to be discouraged by the carelessness or obstinacy of those who know not what they do. We are aware of the difficulty, yea, the impossibility of succeeding in our endeavour to save the souls of our hearers, if we had only to depend upon our own arguments or earnestness. We are not to reason, but to obey. Our business is to deliver our message, and in our happier moments to water it with our prayers and tears. When we have done this we can do no more. The event must be left with him in whose name we speak. We must not suppress nor disguise what we are commanded to declare; nor wilfully make any additions of our own, to accommodate it to the taste or prejudice of our hearers, 2 Cor. iv. 2. Let those preach smooth things who will venture to answer at the great tribunal, for the souls that have miscarried under their ministry; we dare not. Let those be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, (Rom. i. 16,) who feel no obligations to him for his dying love; we cannot, and by the grace of God, we will not; we will glory in it. God forbid that we should glory in any thing else! (Gal. vi. 14.) Like Ezekiel, we are commanded to preach and prophesy to dry bones, and he who sends us can cause the dry bones to live. "O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!" Ezek. xxxvii. 4. The word of his salvation is sent to you. The Lord is risen indeed! Arise, shine, for your light is come! In his name we proclaim pardon and peace to all who will seek him. But seek him to-day, while it is called to-day; to-morrow is not yours. Seek him now, while he may be found. Harden not your hearts. Tremble, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should finally come short of it, Heb. iv. 1.

SERMON VIII.

THE SUN RISING UPON A DARK WORLD.

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.—Isaiah ix. 2.

CONTRASTS are suited to illustrate and strengthen the impression of each other. The

happiness of those, who, by faith in Messiah, are brought into a state of peace, liberty, and comfort, is greatly enhanced and heightened by the consideration of that previous state of misery in which they once lived, and of the greater misery to which they were justly exposed. They are not only made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, (Col. i. 12, 13,) but they have been delivered from the powers of darkness. Thus, while they have communion with God as a father, they contemplate their privilege with a greater pleasure, than they probably could do if they had never known a difference. They remember a time when they were afar off, without hope, and without God in the world; and they remember how carelessly they then trifled upon the brink of destruction. In this deplorable and dangerous situation they were found of the Lord, when they sought him not, Isa. lxv. 1. He convinced, humbled, and pardoned them, and brought them near to himself, into a state of adoption and communion by the blood of Jesus. The admiration, gratitude, and love, which they feel for this undeserved grace, gives them a more lively sense of the blessings they enjoy. Yea, the thought of what they have been redeemed from (of which they will then have a much clearer perception than at present) will add to their joys in heaven, and inspire such a song of praise as will be peculiar to themselves, and in which the holy angels, who never felt the stings of guilt, nor tasted the sweetness of pardoning mercy, will not be able to join them. They are accordingly represented, in the prophetical vision, as standing nearest to the throne, and uniting in the noblest strains of praise to him who sitteth upon it, (Rev. v. 9—21,) while the surrounding angels can only take part in the chorus, and admire and adore, when they behold the brightest displays of the glory of the wonder-working God, manifested in his love to worthless, helpless sinners.

These opposite ideas are joined in my text. The people who are spoken of as rejoicing in a great light, were, till this light arose and shone upon them, in darkness; walking, sitting, living in darkness, and in the land of the shadow of death. That this passage refers to Messiah, we have a direct proof. The evangelist refers it expressly to him, and points out the time and manner of its literal accomplishment, Matth. iv. 15, 16. I shall first consider the literal sense and completion of the prophecy, and then show how fitly it applies to the state of mankind at large, and to the happy effects of the gospel of salvation; which, by the blessing of God, has been the instrument of bringing multitudes of many nations, peoples, and languages, out of a state of gross darkness, into marvellous light, 1 Pet. ii. 9.

I. Hebrew words (like many in our own language) have often more than one signification. But only one sense can be expressed in a version. And therefore interpreters and translators frequently differ. Which of the different words, used to express the meaning of the same original term, is most happily chosen, may be sometimes decided by the context. The two words, in the first verse of this chapter, rendered *lightly afflicted* and *grievously afflicted*, signify likewise, the one to think lightly of, to account vile; and the other, to honour, to render honourable, and glorious. Both these words occur in one verse, and are used in these senses, in the Lord's message to Eli, "Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed," 1 Sam. ii. 30. Had the same words been thus rendered in the passage before us, the sense of both verses would, I think, have been more plain, connected, and consistent to the following purport, agreeable to the translation given by Vitringa, and the present Bishop of London. "Nevertheless there shall not be dimness [or darkness] as in the time of her vexation or distress. He formerly debased [made light or vile] the land of Zebulon and Naphtali, but in the latter time he hath made it glorious, even [the land] by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. [For] the people that walked in darkness have seen a great light," &c.—Such was the afflicted and low state of Galilee previous to the coming of Messiah; such was the exaltation and honour it derived from his appearance.

1. The land allotted to the tribes of Issachar, Zebulon, and Naphtali, was chiefly included in the province, which, upon a subsequent division of the country, obtained the name of Galilee. The northern part of it, the inheritance of Naphtali, was the boundary or frontier towards Syria, and had been frequently vexed and afflicted, when the sins of Israel brought the armies of their enemies upon them, as frontier countries usually suffer most in times of invasion and war. Particularly this part of the land, called Galilee of the Gentiles, was the first, and most immediately exposed to the ravages of Tiglath-Pileser and Sennacherib. And as the people there were likewise more mixed with foreigners, and at the greatest distance from the capital, Jerusalem, on these accounts Galilee was lightly esteemed by the Jews themselves. They thought that no prophet could arise in Galilee, John vii. 52. It even prejudiced Nathaniel against the first report he received of Jesus as Messiah, that he lived, and was generally supposed (by those who were content to be governed by popular rumour, without inquiring attentively for themselves) to have been born in Galilee. He asked with an appearance of surprise, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" John i. 46. They were accounted a rude, un-

polished, provincial people. And therefore, when Peter would have denied any acquaintance with his Lord, he was discovered to be a Galilean, (Mark xiv. 70,) by his dialect and manner of speech.

2. This despised and least valued part of the land of Israel was the principal scene of Messiah's life and ministry, insomuch that, as I have observed, he was supposed to have been born there, a mistake which his enemies industriously supported and made the most of; for those who could persuade themselves that it was so in fact, would think themselves justified in rejecting his claim, it being one undeniable mark of Messiah, given by the prophet Micah, that he was to be born in Bethlehem of Judah, Micah v. 2. He was, however, brought up at Nazareth, and lived for a time in Capernaum, towns in Galilee, but both of so little repute, that, had they not been connected with his history, it is not probable that their names would have been transmitted to posterity.

3. But by his residence there, Galilee was honoured and ennobled. He himself declared, that on this account, Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum (though probably none of them were more than inconsiderable fishing-towns) were exalted even to heaven, Matth. xi. 21—23. Those were highly privileged places which our Lord condescended to visit in person; so likewise are those places where he is pleased to send his gospel. I have observed formerly, and I make no apology for repeating a truth so very important and so little attended to, that the glorious gospel of the blessed God, when faithfully preached, and thankfully received and improved, renders an obscure village more honourable, and of more real consequence, than the metropolis of a great empire, where this light shineth not. For what are the dark places of the earth, however celebrated for numbers and opulence, for the monuments of ambition and arts, but habitations of cruelty, infatuation, and misery!

4. Though Galilee was favoured with the scriptures, and with synagogue-worship, and the inhabitants were a people who professed to know the God of Israel, it was a land of darkness at the time of Messiah's appearance. Though they were not idolaters, ignorance prevailed among them. The law and the prophets were read in their synagogues, but we may believe to little good purpose, while they were under the direction of perverse teachers, who substituted the traditions of men for the commands of God. The single circumstance of keeping herds of swine, as the Gadarenes did, seems a proof that the law of Moses was but little regarded by them. They, as well as the people of Judea, were under the guidance of the Scribes and Pharisees in their religious concerns, who were, if I may use a modern phrase, the clergy of that time; and these, we are assured by him who knew their hearts, were generally corrupted, blind leaders of the blind. Yet they were held in ignorant admiration, and implicitly submitted to. From the character of the public ministers of religion, we may, without great danger of mistake, infer the character of the people who are pleased and satisfied with their ministrations. As the disciple cannot, ordinarily, be expected to be superior to his master, (Luke vi. 40,) the religion of the scribes may be taken as a standard of that of the Galileans, who were instructed by them: yet these were the people among whom Messiah chiefly conversed; so that his enemies styled him a Galilean and a Nazarene, as a mark of reproach and contempt. Many of his apostles, perhaps the most of them, were Galileans likewise. He seeth not as man seeth, 1 Sam. xvi. 7. The most of his immediate followers while upon earth were such as men despised, on account of their situation, rank, or callings; publicans and sinners, fishermen and Galileans. This was, among other reasons, for the encouragement of the poor, the destitute, the despised, the miserable, and the guilty, in succeeding ages, who should desire to put their trust in his name and to implore his mercy. To those who received him he was the light, the true light; he relieved them from the ignorance, wickedness, and distress in which he found them. They, on their parts, bore testimony to him. They saw and acknowledged his glory. They felt his power, and devoted themselves to his service. Thus much for the literal sense.

II. But this prophecy is not to be restrained to the first and more immediate season of its accomplishment. The Lord speaks thus of Messiah in another place: "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth," Isaiah xlix. 6. And there are many declarations of a like import. He is still the light of the world, (John viii. 12,) though no longer visible and conversant with men. By the influence and power of his Spirit, he is still present wherever his gospel is known. This his word of grace and truth he sends where he pleases, and with a discrimination not unlike that which he observed when he was upon earth. The gospel is preached to the poor. Courts and palaces are seldom favoured with it. While he passes by many great cities, many habitations of the wise and wealthy, he is known in villages and cottages. His condescension and favour to those who are unnoticed by the world, cannot be too highly extolled. That the others are excluded from the same benefits is more properly to be ascribed to their obstinacy than to his will. They exclude themselves. He

stands at the door and knocks, Rev. iii. 20. His word is within their reach; his ministers are within their call. They might easily enjoy every mean and help which the gospel provides for sinners if they pleased, but they do not please. They are either engaged in a round of sensual pleasure, or engrossed by studies and pursuits which possess their hearts and fill up their thoughts and time, so that they have neither leisure nor inclination to attend to the things which pertain to their peace. Instead of inviting his gospel to them, they too frequently employ their power and influence to discountenance, and, if possible, to suppress it. They have their choice. The great and the gay will not receive his message; it is therefore sent to the poor and to the wretched, and they will hear it. Yet as he visited Jerusalem in person, and taught there, so London likewise is favoured with the light of his gospel. But alas! how few believe the report! They who do, experience the change described in my text. Their darkness is changed into marvellous light.

Mankind, till enlightened by the word and Spirit of grace, are truly in a state of darkness. Thick darkness is a vail which conceals from us, not only distant, but the nearest objects. A man in the dark cannot perceive either friend or enemy; he may be in great danger, yet think himself in safety; or, if he thinks himself in danger, be unable to take any step for his preservation, from a want of light. Thus, though God be our maker and preserver, though in him we live, move, and have our being, though we are surrounded with his presence, and proofs of his wisdom and goodness are before us wherever we turn our eyes, yet we live without him in the world. Equally ignorant are we of ourselves, of the proper happiness of our nature, or how it is to be attained. We know neither the cause, nor the cure, nor the consequences of our proneness to cleave to the dust, and of placing our affection on inadequate and unsatisfying objects.

And if we suppose a person awakened to a conviction of the evil of sin, and to understand that nothing less than the favour of God can make a rational and immortal creature happy, still, without the gospel, he would be in darkness and the shadow of death. His case may be compared to that of a person shipwrecked upon some desert, inhospitable coast, suffering great horrors and anxiety, from his exposedness to perish, by hunger, by enemies, or wild beasts—who, if he saw, at no very great distance, an island, and was, by some means, informed and assured, that that island was the seat of safety, plenty, and pleasure; and that, if he was once there, his dangers would all cease, and his utmost wishes be satisfied; still, if there were neither bridge, nor boat, nor any means by which he might arrive thither, to know that happiness was so near him, yet inaccessible to him, would but aggravate his misery, and make his despair more emphatically pungent. Miserable indeed must we be, if we clearly perceived that only he, whose creatures we are, can make us happy; and that, as sinners, we have forfeited his favour, and are utterly incapable of regaining it, if we were left under these views, without any hope of relief. Such must have been our situation sooner or later, if God, who is rich in mercy, had not himself provided the means of reconciliation. For though a hope of pardon is easily taken up by those who are ignorant of the holiness of God, and the malignity of sin, yet nothing but a declaration from himself, that there is forgiveness with him, can give peace to a truly awakened conscience. But Jesus dispels this darkness, and brings life and immortality to light by the gospel. For,

1. The office and agency of the Holy Spirit, so absolutely necessary to make us duly sensible, either of our danger, or of the possibility of escaping it, is entirely the effect of his mediation. The soul of man, originally formed to be the temple of the living God, when defiled by sin, was justly forsaken by its great inhabitant; and, since the fall, answers the prophetical description given of Babylon: "It is become the habitation of devils, the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird," Rev. xviii. 2. If we ask, as with good reason we may, How can the wise and holy God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and with whom evil cannot dwell, return to his sanctuary, thus polluted and profaned? an answer is afforded in that gracious promise, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you: and I will take away the stony heart, and I will give you a heart of flesh, and," in order to this, "I will put my Spirit within you," Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26. But the source of this mercy is his sovereign love and purpose, to give the seed of the woman, his only Son, to be the mediator of sinners. By his atonement, to be manifested in due time, but which had a virtual influence from the beginning, the Holy Spirit returned to dwell with men.

2. His obedience unto death, when revealed by the Holy Spirit to the enlightened conscience, affords a clear and satisfactory discovery of reconciliation with God: it shows, that on his part, every hinderance to the free exercise of mercy is thereby removed, the honour of his law vindicated, and the demands of his justice answered. On our parts, by opening a door of hope, it removes that enmity and obduracy of heart, which are nourished by consciousness of guilt, and a secret foreboding of deserved punishment. But when the dignity of the Redeemer's

person, the causes, nature, and design of his sufferings are understood, emotions of admiration, love, and gratitude, till then unknown, are felt, and obstinate sinners are made a willing people in this day of divine power.

3. The doctrine of the cross pours a light upon every subject and circumstance in which we are concerned. It enlarges the mind, and forms the judgment and taste, agreeable to the standard of truth, and the real nature of things. It rectifies those prejudices and prepossessions which dispose us to mistake good for evil, and evil for good, (Isa. v. 20,) to pursue trifles with earnestness, and to trifle with things of the greatest importance. In Jesus Christ crucified, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are at once both hidden and exhibited. This object the holy angels, whose knowledge of the wonders in creation, without doubt, greatly surpasses our conceptions, incessantly contemplate with delight, as affording the brightest displays of the manifold wisdom of God, Eph. iii. 10. It is especially the fountain of wisdom to sinners. They look unto him, and are enlightened. The slight and partial thoughts they once entertained of the great God, the mistaken judgment they formed of themselves, of their state and their conduct, are corrected by their knowledge of the cross: from thence they derive a solid hope, a humble spirit, just views of their duty and obligations, and motives and prospects which animate them in a course of cheerful, persevering obedience to the will of God.

4. In this way, God, as revealed in Christ, is apprehended and chosen, as the chief and proper good of the soul. Thus the poor are enriched with the pearl of great price, and the weary obtain rest. The mind, no longer burdened with anxiety, nor mortified with a succession of disappointments, which attended the vain pursuit of happiness in earthly things, possesses present peace, and rejoices in the expectation of future glory. It is released from the slavery of hewing out broken cisterns, and introduced to the fountain of living waters. Or, to close with the beautiful image in my text, The people who once walked in darkness, and the region of the shadow of death, are translated into the kingdom of life and salvation, Col. i. 13.

How greatly are they to be pitied who reject the light of the gospel! It is true, they cannot see it; but it is equally true, they will not. But may I not hope that this is a day of divine power, in which some of you shall be made a willing people? Do not reason against your own life, but repent, and believe the gospel. The light shines around you, whether you perceive it or not; and it has an efficacy to open the eyes of the blind. Where the gospel is preached, the Lord is present. If you call upon him, he will hear, and you shall receive your sight. If the grace and the glory of the Saviour have hitherto made no impression upon your heart, you are spiritually blind. Could you be sensible of your disorder, the remedy is at hand. If now, at last, you are willing to seek him, he will be found of you. But if you deliberately prefer darkness, your state is awfully dangerous; and if you persist in your obstinacy, your ruin is unavoidable. God is gracious and long-suffering, but he will not be mocked, Gal. vi. 7. Humble yourselves at once, and implore his mercy, or else prepare to meet him in judgment. But be assured he will not meet you as a man. You must either bend or break. The Lord forbid that he should say to any of you, in the great day of his appearance, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire!"

SERMON IX.

CHARACTERS AND NAMES OF MESSIAH.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.—Isaiah ix. 6.

SUCH was the triumphant exultation of the Old Testament church! Their noblest hopes were founded upon the promise of Messiah; their sublimest songs were derived from the prospect of his advent. By faith, which is the substance of things hoped for, they considered the gracious declarations of the faithful unchangeable God as already accomplished, though the actual performance respected a period, as yet future and distant; especially as believers, under that dispensation, already felt the influence of the redemption which Messiah was to consummate in the fulness of time. It was the knowledge of his engagement on the behalf of sinners that gave life and significancy to all the institutions of the ceremonial law, which otherwise, though of divine appointment, would have been a heavy and burdensome yoke, Acts xv. 10. Isaiah, therefore, prepares this joyful song for the true servants of God, who lived in his time; and though it was a day of trial and rebuke, they were provided with a sufficient compensation for all their sufferings, in being warranted to say, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder," &c.

This ancient song is still new. It has been, and will be taken up from age to age, by the New Testament church, with superior advantage. I trust many of you understand it well, and rejoice in it daily. Men naturally look for something wherein to rejoice and

glory. Little reason have the wise to glory in their supposed wisdom, (Jer. ix. 23,) or the strong in their fading strength, or the rich in their transitory wealth; but this is a just and unfailing ground of glory to true christians, that, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given," &c.

When a sinner is enlightened by the Holy Spirit, to understand the character and offices of Messiah, his ability and willingness to save those who are ready to perish, and the happiness of all who are brought into subjection to his gracious government, and when he begins to feel the cheering effects of faith in his name, then this song becomes his own, and exactly suits the emotions and gratitude of his heart. But many persons will despise and pity him as a weak enthusiast. And yet, perhaps, they do not think so unfavourably of the rapture of Archimedes, of whom it is related, that having suddenly discovered the solution of a difficult problem while he was bathing, he was so transported with joy, that he forgot his situation, sprang instantly from the bath, and ran through the city, crying, "I have found it, I have found it!" He is not usually charged with madness on this account, though the expression of his joy was certainly over-proportioned to the cause. The truth is, the world will allow of a vehemence approaching to ecstacy, on almost any occasion, but on that alone, which, above all others, will justify it. A person who would be thought destitute of taste, if he was unaffected by the music to which this passage is set, would, at the same time, hazard his reputation for good sense, with some judges, if he owned himself affected by the plain meaning of the words. Incompetent judges surely! who are pleased to approve of warmth and emotion of spirit, provided the object be trivial, and only condemn it in concerns of the greatest importance! But I trust the character of my auditory is very different, and that the most of you desire to enter into the spirit of this passage, and to have a more lively sense of your own interests in it. May the Lord grant your desire, and accompany our meditations upon it with his power and blessing!

Every clause in this passage might furnish subject for a long discourse; but my plan will only permit me briefly to touch upon the several particulars, which will lead to a recapitulation or summary of what has been already considered more largely concerning the person, offices, and glory of Messiah. We have,

I. His incarnation.—"Unto us a child is born;" in our nature, born of a woman: "Unto us a son is given;" not merely a man child, but, emphatically, a son, the Son of God. This was the most precious gift, the highest proof and testimony of divine love. The distinction and union of these widely distant natures, which constitute the person of Christ, the God-man, the Mediator, is, in the judgment and language of the apostle, the great mystery of godliness, (1 Tim. iii. 16,) the pillar and ground of truth. I shall not repeat what I have already offered on this point in the fifth sermon. It is the central truth of revelation, which, like the sun, diffuses a light upon the whole system, no part of which can be rightly understood without it. Thus the Lord of all humbled himself, to appear in the form of a servant for the sake of sinners.

II. His exaltation.—"The government shall be upon his shoulder." In our nature he suffered, and in the same nature he reigns. When he had overcome the sharpness, the sting of death, he took possession of the kingdom of glory as his own, and opened it to all who believe in him. Now we can say, He who governs in heaven and on earth, and whom all things obey, is the child who was born, the son who was given for us. Some subsequent passages will lead us hereafter to contemplate more directly the glory of the Redeemer's administration in the kingdoms of providence and grace. At present, therefore, I shall only observe, that the exaltation of the Redeemer infers the dignity and security of the people who are united to him by faith. They have, in one respect, an appropriate honour, in which the angels cannot share. Their best friend, related to them in the same nature, is seated upon the throne of glory. Since he is for them, who can be against them? What may they not expect, when he, who has so loved them as to redeem them with his own blood, has all power committed unto him, both in heaven and on earth! For,

III. The names and characters here ascribed to him, are not only expressive of what he is in himself, but of what he has engaged to be to them.

1. His name shall be called Wonderful.—In another place the word is rendered Secret, Judges xiii. 18. It is true of him in both senses. He is Wonderful in his person, obedience, and sufferings; in his grace, government, and glory. So far as we understand his name, the revelation by which, as by a name, he is made known, we may, we must believe, admire, and adore. But how limited and defective is our knowledge! His name is Secret. Who can by searching find him out? Job. xi. 7. His greatness is incomprehensible, his wisdom untraceable, his fullness inexhaustible, his power infinite. No one knoweth the Son but the Father. But they have a true, though not an adequate knowledge of him, who trust, love, and serve him; and in their view he is Wonderful! The apostle expresses the sentiment of their hearts, when he says, "Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

2. Another of his names is Counsellor.—The great councils of redemption, in which every concern respecting the glory of God and the salvation of sinners was adjusted, were established with him, and in him, before the foundation of the world. And he is our Counsellor or Advocate with the Father, who pleads our cause, and manages all our affairs in perfect righteousness, and with infallible success; so that no suit can possibly miscarry which he is pleased to undertake. To him likewise we must apply (and we shall not apply in vain) for wisdom and direction, in all that belongs to our duty, and the honour of our profession in the present life. In all our difficulties, dangers, and cares, we must look to him for guidance and support. This is to be wise unto salvation. His secret is with them that consult him; so that though the world may deem them weak and ignorant as babes (and he teaches them to think thus of themselves,) they have a cheering and practical knowledge of many important subjects, which are entirely hidden from those who are wise and prudent in their own eyes.

3. He is the Mighty God.—Though in the office of mediator, he acts in the character of a servant, his perfections and attributes are truly divine. Only the mighty God could make a provision capable of answering the demands of the holy law, which we had transgressed. Only the mighty God could be a suitable Shepherd to lead millions of weak helpless creatures to glory, through the many difficulties, dangers, and enemies, they are exposed to in their passage. Add to this, the honour, dependence, and obedience, which this great Shepherd claims from his sheep, are absolute and supreme; and they would be guilty of idolatry, if they did not know that he is the mighty God. Though real christians, who are enlightened and taught by the Holy Spirit, may, and do differ in their views and explanations of some revealed truths, I conceive they must be all agreed in this point. It is not only necessary to be known as the only solid foundation of a sinner's hope, but it immediately respects the object of divine worship. For if the Redeemer is not possessed of the incommunicable perfections of Deity, the New Testament, in its most obvious and literal signification, would be chargeable, not only with countenancing, but with expressly teaching and enjoining idolatry.

4. Farther, he shall be called the Everlasting Father.—He is not ashamed to call them brethren, (Heb. ii. 11,) having condescended to assume their human nature. But they are also his children. They are born into his family by the efficacy of his own word and Spirit. From him they derive their spiritual life, being united to him by faith, and receiving from first to last out of his fullness. And he is an everlasting Father. Our fathers according to the flesh are subject to death. But his relation to them subsists unchangeably, and therefore they cannot be destitute: and he is thus equally to them all. They live upon the earth, and are removed from it, in a long succession of ages; but he is the Father of the everlasting age, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. All generations shall call him blessed. To him, therefore, the apostle teaches us to apply that sublime passage of the Psalmist: "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail," Psalm cii. 25—27; Heb. i. 10—12.

5. Lastly, he shall be called the Prince of Peace,—whose sovereign prerogative it is to speak peace to his people; (Psalm lxxxv. 8;) and there is no peace, deserving the name, but that which he bestows. The scripture expressly declares, that there is no peace to the wicked, Is. lvii. 21. By whatever name we call that thoughtless security and insensibility, in which mankind generally live while ignorant of God and of themselves, we cannot allow it to be peace. It is the effect of blindness and hardness of heart; it will neither bear reflection nor examination. Can they be said to possess peace, however fatally regardless they may be of futurity, who are at present under the dominion of restless, insatiable, and inconsistent passions and appetites? But the kingdom of Messiah is a kingdom of peace, and in him his happy subjects enjoy a peace which passeth all understanding, (Phil. iv. 7,) such as the world can neither give nor take away. He has made peace by the blood of his cross, (Col. i. 20,) for all that come unto God by him. Until they are in trouble and distress, until they feel the bitterness and fear the consequences of their sins, and see the impossibility of helping themselves, they will not apply to him; but whenever they do seek him, thus weary and heavy-laden, he hears their prayer. Their minds, for a season, are like the sea in a storm, they are distressed with guilt, fears, and temptations; but when he reveals his mighty name and boundless grace to their hearts, and says, Peace, be still, (Mark iv. 39,) then there is a great calm. Being justified by faith, they have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. He gives them peace likewise in a changing troublesome world, by inviting and enabling them to cast all their cares upon him, and to trust all their concerns in his hands, upon the assurance his word gives them, that he careth for them, and will manage and overrule every thing for their good. In proportion as their faith realizes his promises, they feel a

composure and satisfaction. Knowing that the hairs of their head are numbered, that their afflictions, no less than their comforts, are tokens of his love, that he will give them strength according to their day, that he will be their guide and their guard even unto death; they are not greatly moved by any events, or disturbed by apprehensions, because their hearts are fixed, (Psalm cxii. 7,) trusting in the Lord. Farther, he teaches them (what can only be learnt of him) how to seek and maintain peace among men. His love subdues the power of self, and forms them to a spirit of philanthropy and benevolence, which has often such an effect, that they who dislike them for their attachment to him and to his precepts, and would willingly speak evil of them, are ashamed, and put to silence, by their perseverance in well-doing. Thus their peace increases as a river, which runs with a deeper and a broader stream as it approaches the ocean. For their peace is then strongest and most unshaken, when they draw near to death, and are upon the point of resigning their souls into his hands. This is the time, when, if not before, the false peace of the worldling, will give way to terror and dismay. But "mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace," Psalm xxxvii. 37. It must be allowed, that many of his people, through the power of temptation and remaining unbelief, have, at some seasons, uncomfortable fears concerning a dying hour; but when the time of their dismission actually arrives, we seldom see them afraid of the summons. There is a strength necessary to support the soul at the approach of death, which is usually withheld till the time of need. But then it is vouchsafed. They who have frequently access to the beds of dying believers, can bear testimony, as eye-witnesses, to the faithfulness of their Lord. How often have we seen them triumphing in the prospect of immortality! as happy, in defiance of pain and sickness, as we can well conceive it possible to be while in the body, and as sure of heaven, as if they were already before the throne.

Such is the character of Messiah! This is the God whom we adore; our almighty, unchangeable Friend! His greatness and goodness, his glory and his grace, when once known, fix the heart, no more to rove, and fill it with admiration, gratitude, and desire. From hence spring a cheerful, unreserved obedience to his commands, and a deliberate voluntary submission to his holy will. For his people do not serve him or yield to him by constraint; at least it is only the pleasing constraint of love, which makes their duty their delight, and their burden and grief is that they can serve him no better.

May we be all thus minded! I dare not hope it is so with us all at present. But this is the day of his grace. For this cause he came into the world, that he might draw many hearts to himself, John xii. 32. And for this purpose he favours us with his gospel, by which he still says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved," Isaiah xlv. 22. "Come unto me, and I will give you rest," Matth. xi. 28. To be found among his faithful followers, in the great day when he shall come to judge the world, is the one thing which, above all others, deserves our solicitude.

Hear then his voice to-day. Perhaps you are apprised of the necessity of a change of heart and life, at some future period, in order to die safely. Such a change is equally necessary if you wish to live comfortably. While you are unfit to die, you can have no true enjoyment of life. It were easy to prove at large that procrastination is highly dangerous. Admitting that, according to your present feelings, you really think yourself determined to seek the Lord at some future time, do you consider how many uncertainties you presume upon? Are you sure that you shall not be suddenly cut off by an unexpected and unthought-of stroke, or visited by a fever which may quickly bring you into a state of delirium or stupefaction, and render your projected repentance impracticable? Yea, it will in any circumstances be impracticable, unless God is pleased to influence your mind by his good Spirit. If you grieve this Spirit now, by resisting his operations, what reason have you to expect that he will then return? Do we not see many instances of what the poet, with great propriety, calls, "A slow sudden death!" How many people, while pining away under the power of some incurable disease, amuse themselves with the hope of recovery to the last gasp; and though their acquaintance read death in their countenance for weeks or months, in defiance of such repeated and long-continued warnings, they die as suddenly, with respect to their own apprehensions, as if killed by lightning. Tremble, lest such be your last end, if you trifle with God, who now calls you by his gospel, to seek him to-day, while it is called to-day.

But I would lead you to consider your delay not only as dangerous but as unreasonable. Why are you afraid of being happy too soon? What strange and hard thoughts have you of God, if you suppose you can find more pleasure in living according to your own wills than in obedience to his commands! Can the world give you such peace and satisfaction as I have attempted to describe? Do you think a real persuasion that God is your friend, and that heaven will be your home, will spoil the relish of your earthly enjoyments, or make your lives uncomfortable? What hard thing does the Lord require of you, that you are so unwilling to comply? If we set aside, for a moment, the consideration of a future state and a final judgment,

yet even in a temporal view you would be great gainers, if your spirit and your conduct were regulated by the gospel. What heart-breaking troubles, what losses, contests, pains of body, and remorse of conscience, would some of you have avoided, if you had believed and obeyed the word of God! What distresses may your headstrong passions soon plunge you into, if you presume to go on in your sins! For that the way of transgressors is hard, is not only declared in scripture, but proved by the history and observation of every day. Forsake the foolish, therefore, and live. And while the door of mercy is still open before you, pray to him who is able to bless you indeed, by delivering you from the guilt and from the power of your iniquities; lest, if being often reproved, (Prov. xxix. 1,) and still hardening your hearts, you should suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

SERMON X.

THE ANGEL'S MESSAGE AND SONG.

There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel of the Lord said unto them, Fear not; for, behold, I bring unto you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will towards men.—Luke ii. 8—14.

The gratification of the great, the wealthy, and the gay was chiefly consulted in the late exhibitions in Westminster-Abbey. But notwithstanding the expense of the preparations, and the splendid appearance of the auditory, I may take it for granted that the shepherds who were honoured with the first information of the birth of Messiah, enjoyed, at free cost, a much more sublime and delightful entertainment. How poor and trivial is the most studied magnificence and brilliancy of an earthly court compared with that effulgence of glory which surrounded the shepherds! The performers of this Oratorio, if I may be allowed the expression, were a multitude of the heavenly host. And though I do not suppose that the angel delivered his message in the cadence which we call recitative, I have no doubt but the chorus was a song, sweetly melodious as from blest voices; a song which the redeemed and the angels of the Lord are still singing before the throne; a new song, (Rev. v. 9,) a song which will be always new. We are made acquainted with the subject, yea, with the very words of this song. May our hearts be suitably affected by the consideration of them to-day! The melody and harmony of heaven are far above our conceptions. The music of that happy land has no dependence upon the vibrations of the air, or the admirable structure of the human ear. But we have reason to believe there is, in the world of light and love, something analogous to what we call music, though different in kind, and vastly superior in effect to any strains that can be produced by the most exquisite voices or instruments upon earth; as we readily judge the glory of an angel to be unspeakably more excellent, both in kind and in degree, than any thing that is deemed glorious among mortals.

To consider this passage at large would require many discourses. I shall confine myself at present to a few brief reflections on the circumstances of this heavenly vision, the message of the angel, and the concluding chorus or song.

I. The circumstances.

1. Lo, an angel came upon them, &c.—Suddenly, when they had no expectation of such a visit, without any thing that might previously engage their attention, all at once, like a flash of lightning, a glory shone around them, and an angel appeared. We do not wonder that they were impressed with fear. We live near, perhaps in the midst of, an invisible world, full of great and wonderful realities, which yet, by too many persons, are considered and treated as nonentities, because they are not perceived by our bodily senses. But the scripture assures us of the fact; and to reject this testimony, because it is not confirmed by our senses, is no less irrational and unphilosophical than impious. A man born blind can have no more conception of light and colours, than we have of what passes in the world of spirits. And a nation of blind men, if there were such a nation, would probably treat a seeing person as a visionary madman, if he spoke to them of what he saw. But he would be sure of his own perceptions, though he could not satisfy the inquiries and cavils of the blind. Our senses are accommodated to our present state; but there may be a multitude of objects, as real in themselves, and as near to us, as any that we behold with our eyes, of which we, for want of suitable faculties, can have no idea. To deny this, and to make our senses the criteria of the existence of things which are not within their reach, is exactly such an absurdity as a blind man would be

guilty of, who should deny the possibility of a rainbow, because he never heard it or felt it. However, faith is the evidence of things not seen. And they who believe the word of God cannot doubt of the existence of an invisible state and invisible agents. The barrier between the inhabitants of that state and us is too strong to be passed, for the will of the great Creator seems to be the barrier. Otherwise it is probable they could easily surprise us, since, upon special occasions, they have been permitted to discover themselves. We have a natural dread of such visitants even though they should appear to us, as they did to the shepherds, as messengers of peace and mercy from God. Yet we must shortly mingle with them. Death will introduce us into the world of spirits, and what we shall then meet with, what beings will be ready to accost us upon our first entrance into that unknown, unchangeable state, who can say? It deserves our serious thought. We are now encompassed by the objects of sense, but we must be soon separated from them all. We live in a crowd, but we must die alone. Happy are they, who, like Stephen, shall be able to commend their departing spirits into the hands of Jesus! He is Lord of all worlds, and has the keys of hades, of the invisible state.

2. The angel spoke—The gospel was preached by an angel to Zacharias, to the virgin mother of Messiah, now to the shepherds; and, perhaps, to none but these. The angel, who appeared to Cornelius, said nothing to him of Jesus, but only directed him to send for Peter, Acts x. 4, 5. The glorious gospel of the blessed God, with respect to its dignity, depth, and importance, may seem a fitter theme for the tongue of an angel than of a man; but, angels never sinned, and though they might proclaim its excellency, they could not, from experience, speak of its efficacy. In this respect sinful worms are better qualified to preach to others, concerning him by whom they have themselves been healed and saved. Their weakness, likewise, is better suited to show that the influence and success of the gospel is wholly owing to the power of God. It has therefore pleased God to put this treasure into earthen vessels, and to commit the ministry of his word, not to angels, but to men. They whom he is pleased to employ in this office, however weak and unworthy in themselves, derive an honour and importance from the message entrusted to them, and are so far worthy of the same attention, as if an angel from heaven spoke. They are sinful men, and have reason to think humbly of themselves: nor should they, as the servants of a suffering, crucified Master, either wonder or complain if they meet with unkindness from those whom they wish to serve; but they may magnify their office, (Rom. xi. 13,) and it is at the peril of their hearers to despise it. What the world accounts in us the foolishness of preaching, is made to those who simply receive it, the wisdom and power of God. To others, even angels would preach in vain. They who hear not Moses and the prophets, who submit not to the ordinary methods and means of grace which God has appointed, would not be persuaded, though one should rise from the dead.

3. The angel was sent with the most interesting news that could be made known to mankind; not to Cæsar, or to Herod, or to the High Priest, but to obscure and lowly shepherds. The Lord seeth not as man seeth; the petty distinctions that obtain among men are not regarded by him. He is equally near to them that fear him in every situation of life, as the sun shines, as freely and fully, upon a cottage as upon a palace. These shepherds were, doubtless, of the number of the happy few, who, in that time of degeneracy, were waiting and longing for the consolation of Israel. The heads of the Jewish people found their consolation in their rank, and wealth, and in the respect paid them by the vulgar. These things usually add to the idea of self-importance, and feed those tempers which are most displeasing to the Lord, and which indispose the mind to the reception of the gospel, or to any due inquiry concerning it. And thus, in fact from age to age, it has generally been hidden from the wise and the great, and revealed unto babes. The magi, or wise men who lived in the east, where the knowledge of astronomy obtained, but where the scripture was not known, were guided to Messiah by the appearance of a new star or meteor. The shepherds, who were acquainted with the prophecies concerning Messiah, were informed of their accomplishment by an angel. Thus the Lord was pleased to suit the different manner of making known his will, to the previous situation of the persons.

II. The message of the angel, though concise, was comprehensive and full. It contained the Fact, "Unto you is born this day"—the Place, "In the city of David," that is, in Bethlehem, so called, because David likewise had been born there; (Luke ii. 4;)—the Office of Messiah, "A Saviour"—his Name, Honour, and Character, "Christ," or the Anointed; "the Lord," the head and king of Israel, and of the church, the Lord of all. I do but recite these particulars now, as they will repeatedly offer to our consideration in the series of subjects before me. The description of the state in which they would find him, was such, as could only be reconciled to his titles and honours, by that simple faith, which, without vain reasoning, acquiesces in the declarations of God. For how unlikely would it seem to a merely human judgment, that the Saviour of sinners, the promised Messiah, the Lord of all, should be a babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and lying in a man-

ger. Yet thus it was. Though rich in himself, he became poor for our sakes, 2 Cor. viii. 9. On this account, as the scriptures had foretold, he was despised and rejected of men. Though he came to his own, as a Lord or Master to his own house; yet, coming in this manner, his own professed servants, who pretended that they were longing and waiting for him, slighted and opposed him; preferred a notorious malefactor to him, and put him to death as an impostor and blasphemer. But the shepherds reasoned not through unbelief, and therefore they were not staggered: they obeyed the message, they went, they saw, they believed.

The seeming repugnance between the greatness of Messiah's claims, and the state of humiliation in which he appeared when upon earth, was the great stumbling-block then, and continues to be so at this day. Because he stooped so low, and made himself of no reputation, too many still refuse to acknowledge his divine character. But they who are willing to be taught by the word and Spirit of God, see a beauty and propriety in his submitting to be born in a stable, and to live as a poor man, destitute of house or property. Hereby he poured contempt upon worldly pomp and vanity, sanctified the state of poverty to his followers, and set them an encouraging example to endure it with cheerfulness. They, like the shepherds and his first disciples, are delivered from their natural prejudices, and are enabled to behold his glory, through the vail of his outward humiliation, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father. And his condescension in becoming poor for their sakes, that they through his poverty might be made rich, affects their hearts with admiration and gratitude.

But though too many, who are governed by the spirit and maxims of this world, are far from admiring his love, in assuming our nature under those circumstances, which, from his infancy to his death, exposed him to the contempt of his enemies, it is otherwise thought of in yonder world of light. For we read, that when the angel had declared to the shepherds the glad tidings, a multitude of the heavenly host expressed their joy by a song, which is the next subject that offers to our consideration.

III. Their highest praise was excited by a view of the effects which this unexampled love would produce.

1. "Glory to God in the highest." In the highest heaven, in the highest degree, for this highest instance of his mercy. At the creation these morning-stars sung for joy, Job xxxviii. 7. But redemption was a greater work than they had yet seen, and a work by which his goodness, wisdom, and power, would be still more abundantly magnified. The glory of God, the exhibition of his adorable perfections, to the view of intelligent creatures, is the last and highest end of all his works. Nor would it be worthy of the infinite eternal God, in comparison with whose immensity, the aggregate of all created good is no more than a point compared with the universe, or a single ray of light compared with the sun, to propose any thing short of his own glory, as the ultimate, final cause of his designs. And in proportion as any finite intelligences are conformed to the will of their Creator, and impressed with a sense of his pre-eminence, their highest end and aim will be the same with his. If, therefore, we compare the glory of God, and the good of his creatures together, we may refer to them what our Lord was pleased to declare of the two great commandments. The former is incomparably the first and greatest of his ends; the second, in its proper place and subordination, is like unto it, and inseparably connected with it, or rather derived from it. The former is, if I may so speak, the essential difference of the divine operations; the latter, so far as consistent with it, is the result of a glorious and efficacious property of his consummate excellence. In the redemption of fallen man, both are displayed to the highest advantage. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men."

The glory of his goodness:—this shines bright in the capacities and happiness he has communicated to angels; but it shines with greater brightness in the mercy afforded to mankind; whether we consider the objects, who are sinners, rebels, and enemies; or his purpose in their favour, not only to restore the life they had forfeited, but to bestow it more abundantly, (John x. 10,) with respect to title, security, and honour; or lastly, and principally, the mean by which their deliverance from everlasting misery, and their possession of everlasting happiness, is procured; and which could only be procured by the humiliation and death of the Son of his love.

The glory of his wisdom, in adjusting the demands of his holiness, justice, and truth, with the purposes of his mercy;—in providing such a method for the exercise of his mercy, as renders his displeasure against sin more conspicuous by pardoning, than by punishing it;—in abasing the sinner's pride, by the very considerations which inspire his hope and confidence; so that while he confesses himself unworthy of the very air that he breathes, he is encouraged and warranted to claim a participation in all the blessings of grace and glory:—and finally, in proposing motives, which, when rightly understood, are always found sufficient to influence the heart, even though it has been habitually hardened in sin, long deaf to the voice of reason, conscience, and interest, and equally unaffected by the judgments or the mercies of God, till enlightened to perceive the excellency of the gospel.

The glory of his power, in making all the acts of free agents, through a long succession of ages, subservient to this great purpose, not excepting those who most laboured to obstruct it;—in changing the disposition of the sinner, however obstinate;—and in carrying on his work of grace, when once begun, in such feeble inconsistent creatures as men are, in defiance of all difficulties and opposition arising from within or without.

These are subjects which the angels desire to look into, (1 Pet. i. 12,) which fill the most exalted intelligences with admiration. The glory of God was manifested, was celebrated in the highest heavens, when Messiah was born of a woman.

2. The great design and effect of his appearance with regard to mankind, is peace. "On earth peace." Man, as a fallen creature, is in a state of war and rebellion against his Maker. He has renounced his allegiance and dependence, is become his own end. He is now against God, disobedient to his laws, and disaffected to his government. And his conscience, if not stupified and cauterized by frequent resistance of conviction, suggests that God is against him. He feels he is not happy here, he fears he shall be miserable hereafter. This apprehension strengthens his aversion from God. And, indeed, without an express assurance from the Lord himself, whom he has offended, that there is forgiveness with him, he would not only fear, but sink into despair, if he rightly understood the horrid enormity of a state of alienation from the blessed God. But infinite wisdom and mercy have provided, and propounded a method, by which the honour of the divine perfections and government are secured, and pardon and peace vouchsafed to rebels. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. The knowledge of this mercy, when revealed to the sinner's heart, subdues his enmity, constrains him to throw down his arms, and to make an unreserved submission and surrender of himself; forms him to a temper of love and confidence, and disposes him to habitual and cheerful obedience. Now mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other, (Psal. lxxxv. 10;) and God is glorified in the highest, for peace proclaimed upon the earth.

The expression of "good will towards men," seems to rise upon the former. Not only peace, but acceptance and adoption in the Beloved. Sinners who believe in the Son of God, are not merely delivered from the condemnation they have deserved, but are united to their Saviour; considered as one with him, his children, the members of his body, and made partakers of his life, and his glory. God is their portion, and heaven is their home. The Lord's satisfaction in this, as the greatest of all his works, is expressed by the prophet in such astonishing terms of condescension, as surpass our utmost conceptions; and we can only say, Lord what is man that thou art thus mindful of him! We believe, admire, and adore. "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty: He will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest in his love, he will rejoice over thee with singing," Zeph. iii. 17.

Assuredly this song of the heavenly host is not the language of our hearts by nature. We once sought our pleasure and happiness in a very different way. We were indifferent to the glory of God, and strangers to his peace. And some of us are still blind to the excellencies of the gospel, and deaf to its gracious invitations. But we must not expect to sing with the great company of the redeemed hereafter, before the throne of glory, unless we learn, and love their song while we are here, Rev. xiv. 3. They who attain to the inheritance of the saints in light, are first made meet for it in the present life, and in this way. They believe the testimony of the scripture respecting their own guilt, unworthiness, and helplessness; then they receive the record which God has given of his Son. They renounce all confidence in the flesh; (Phil. iii. 3;) they rejoice in Christ Jesus, and from his fulness they derive grace to worship God in the Spirit. A sense of their obligations to the Saviour, disposes them to praise him now as they can; and they rejoice in hope of seeing him ere long as he is, and that then they shall praise him as they ought. For heaven itself, as described in the word of God, could not be a state of happiness to us, unless we are like-minded with the apostle, to account all things loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.

SERMON XI.

MESSIAH'S ENTRANCE INTO JERUSALEM.

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. —And he shall speak peace unto the Heathen.—Zech. ix. 9, 10.

THE narrowness and littleness of the mind of fallen man are sufficiently conspicuous in the idea he forms of magnificence and grandeur. The pageantry and parade of a Roman triumph, or of an eastern monarch, as described in history, exhibit him to us in what he himself accounts his best estate. If you suppose him seated in an imperial carriage, arrayed in splendid apparel, wearing a crown

or tiara ornamented with jewels, preceded and followed by a long train of guards and attendants, surrounded by the unmeaning acclamations of ignorant multitudes, you see the poor worm at the summit of his happiness. He has no conception of any thing greater than this. And the spectators are generally of the same mind. They admire, and they envy, his lot; and there is hardly a person in the crowds around him, but would be very glad to take his place, were it practicable. Yet this great little creature would surely be mortified, if in the height of his self-complacence, he could consider that he had the very same regard for a pre-eminence in finery, the same desire to be admired and envied, and felt the same kind of satisfaction in distinction above his fellows, when he was a child of ten years old. He is in effect a child still, only he has changed his playthings, and now acts upon a larger scale, but with the same trifling and contracted views.

How different was Messiah's entry into Jerusalem foretold in this prophecy, the accomplishment of which we read in the evangelists! And how differently was he affected by the objects around him! He poured contempt upon the phantom of human glory. This King of kings and Lord of lords was meek and lowly, riding upon an ass's colt, Luke xix. 35—38. And though a secret divine influence constrained the multitude to acknowledge his character, and, with some accommodation to the customs of the times, to strew their garments in the way, as they proclaimed the King who came in the name of Jehovah; yet he appeared unmoved by their applause. Had the history of Jesus, like those which we have of Socrates or Cyrus, been merely the work of a human writer, ambitious to adorn a favourite character with the most splendid qualities of a philosopher or a hero, we should never have known how his mind was engaged in this situation. The Saviour must be divine, his historian must be inspired, the fact must be true; for man could not have invented such a circumstance, that this meek and lowly Saviour took no notice of the zeal and homage of his friends, because his heart was filled with compassion for his enemies, who were thirsting for his blood. For it was then, amidst the acclamation of his disciples, that he beheld the city and wept over it, while he foretold the evils which the rejection of him would bring upon it. "Oh that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things belonging to thy peace! But now they are hidden from thine eyes."

An angel proclaimed his birth to the shepherds; and wise men from the east paid such attention to the new-born Saviour, that the jealousy of Herod was excited, and attempts made to destroy him. But this wonderful infant was brought up in a state of obscurity, in a place of no repute, and known by no higher description than that of the carpenter's son. In the course of his ministry he appeared and was treated as a poor man, he had no certain dwelling-place, he submitted to receive supplies for his support from the contributions of a few of his followers, for the most of them were poor like himself. And though he wrought many wonderful works for the relief of the necessitous and miserable, he admitted no alteration in his own external state, but was content to be poor and despised, for our sakes, to the end of his life. I think the only occasion on which he permitted a public acknowledgment of his person and character, was when he fulfilled this prophecy. And still he was the same meek and lowly Saviour. As his kingdom was not of this world, neither were there any marks of human grandeur in his procession. He approached Jerusalem, attended, indeed, by a concourse of people, but riding upon an ass, and weeping for his enemies.

The passage of the Messiah which follows the chorus of the heavenly host, is taken from these verses. It does not include the whole of them. In one clause there is a small alteration in the expression, but it does not affect the sense. Instead of, "He is just, having salvation," it is, "He is a righteous Saviour."

We may notice,

I. The prophet's address,—"O daughter of Zion and Jerusalem."

II. The exhortation to joy,—"Rejoice and shout."

III. The cause assigned for this joy,—"Thy King cometh."

IV. The characters of the King,—"A righteous Saviour."

V. His great design,—"To speak peace to the heathen."

I. The address,—"O daughter of Zion and Jerusalem." Zion and Jerusalem are indifferently used as emblems of the church, or professing people of God. When they occur together, as here, contradistinguished from each other, Zion, the city of David, the seat of government, and of the temple-worship, may denote the principal persons of the ecclesiastical and civil state; and Jerusalem may be expressive of the people at large, the daughters of a place signifying, according to the Hebrew idiom, the inhabitants. They boasted that they were the Lord's peculiar people; they had the prophecies and promises concerning Messiah in their hands, and were professedly expecting and waiting for his appearance. They are, therefore, called upon to rejoice in it. But when he actually came, though he came to his own, to his own nation, city, and temple; his own people, to whose affection and allegiance he had the justest claim, received him not, John i. 11.

There were a few, however, who truly waited for him as the hope and consolation of Israel, at the time of his birth; and many more were afterwards convinced by his gracious words and works, that he only had the words of eternal life, and became his followers. By their acknowledged principles, they were all bound to acknowledge that prophet whom Moses had foretold God would raise up among them like unto himself, (Deut. xviii. 15—19; Acts vii. 37,) that is, to be, as he had been, a lawgiver, to institute a new dispensation of the true religion; and their refusal involved them, as a nation, in the punishment, which Moses had likewise denounced against those who should refuse to hearken to him. Thus their peculiar advantage in possessing a divine revelation, while the rest of mankind were left ignorant of the will of God, proved an aggravation of their guilt, and rendered their obstinacy more inexcusable, and their condemnation more severe. I am bound to take every opportunity of noticing the striking parallel, in this respect, between the Jewish nation in our Saviour's time, and the nations, who, since that period, have admitted the New Testament as a revelation from God. By assuming the Christian name, and so far calling the Saviour Lord, while they reject the spirit and design of the gospel, and treat the ministers of it with neglect or contempt, they tread in the steps, and share in the guilt, of those who pretended to expect Messiah, and yet crucified him when he appeared among them. In person he could be crucified but once; but the scripture speaks of those who crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame. How far this is the case of the persons who can bear to hear of his passion and his kingdom, when made the subject of a musical entertainment, but upon no other occasion, deserves their serious consideration.

II. The exhortation can only be complied with by those who are sensible of their need of a Saviour, and his authority and ability to save. To these the prophet brings a joyful message, and they will rejoice and shout. The joy of harvest, (Isa. ix. 3,) and of the victors in war, when dividing the spoil of the vanquished, is celebrated with shouting. But sinners who by the knowledge of Messiah, are delivered from going down into the pit, from the dominion of the powers of darkness, and are translated into the kingdom of God, experience a joy far superior, in kind and degree, to any satisfaction that temporal things can afford. It is a joy unspeakable, and full of glory, 1 Pet. i. 8. Jesus, when known and received by faith, is, in the highest sense, light to those who sit in darkness, health to the sick, food to the hungry, and rest to the weary soul. Thus many rejoiced in his goodness when he was upon earth; and he still has a people, and will have to the end of time, who do and shall rejoice in him upon these accounts, though every spring of temporal joy should be dried up. They who know his name, and put their trust in him, are warranted to appropriate those strong expressions of another prophet: "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation," Hab. iii. 17, 18.

III. The ground and cause of this joy is assigned,—"Thy King cometh." Messiah is a king. This title he avowed to Pilate, (Mark xv. 2,) by whose order it was affixed over him upon his cross. That this was not a slight and arbitrary circumstance, but providential and important, we may, I think, infer from the care taken by the evangelists to preserve the remembrance of it, for it is recorded by them all. He is, indeed, King of kings, King and Lord of nations, King of worlds; but he is here spoken of as King of Zion. The kingdom he came to establish upon earth is not of this world, nor like the kingdoms of the world. The maxims, language, interests, and aims of it, are peculiar to itself. His power and providence rule over all; but he is only known, admired, and willingly obeyed by the subjects of his spiritual kingdom, who, though they are in the world, are not of it, but strangers and pilgrims upon the earth. Their πολιτευμα, or true citizenship, is in heaven, Phil. ii. 20. These are his peculiar people. And though they partake with others in the changes and trials incident to this mortal life, and have their several departments and duties assigned them according to his will, as members of society, and it does not yet appear what they shall be; (1 John iii. 2;) they are even now the children and servants of the Lord, and he manifests himself to them as he does not to others. Happy are these his subjects who dwell under his shadow. He rules them, not with that rod of iron by which he bruises and breaks the power of his enemies, but with his golden sceptre of love. He reigns by his own right, and by their full and free consent, in their hearts. He reigns upon a throne of grace, to which they have at all times access; and from whence they receive, in answer to their prayers, mercy and peace, the pardon of all their sins, grace to help in every time of need, and a renewed supply answerable to all their wants, cares, services, and conflicts. So that, though they are surrounded with snares, and fiercely opposed by many enemies, they cannot be overpowered, for the Lord himself is their king and their Saviour. We have,

IV. Two characters of this King,—"He is just, having salvation," or, as it is in the pas-

sage of the Messiah, "He is a righteous Saviour."

1. He is righteous.—His kingdom is founded in righteousness. It is the effect and reward of his obedience unto death, by which he made an end of sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness. As his people receive and expect all from his hand, so likewise for his sake. Such is his command, and such is his promise. "If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it," John xiv. 14. In pleading their cause, and managing their concerns, he is their righteous advocate. And therefore, because his intercession is founded upon a righteous stipulation, which he has completely fulfilled, he does not say, "Father," I ask, but "I will, that those whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory," John xvii. 24.

2. He is a Saviour.—Having salvation in himself; yea, he is their salvation, Isa. xii. 2. His wisdom, power, compassion, and determined purpose, are all engaged to save them fully, freely, and for ever; to save them from guilt, from Satan, and from sin, through all the dangers and trials of this life; to save them to the uttermost, till he fixes them finally out of the reach of all evil, and puts them in possession of all the happiness of which their natures are capable, in a conformity to his own image, and the enjoyment of unclouded, uninterrupted communion with God.

V. His great design was not confined to Israel after the flesh; "he shall speak peace to the Heathen" also. His kingdom comprises, besides the believing posterity of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, a great multitude gathered from amidst all nations, people, and languages, from the east and the west, from the north and the south, Luke xiii. 28, 29. Though the Heathen were universally alienated from God, by evil works and an evil conscience, he has undertaken to reconcile them, and to bring those near who were once afar off. By their knowledge of him, their prisons shall be opened, their chains broken, (Isa. xlv. 14,) their condemnation reversed, and they shall be renewed, and accepted in the Beloved, as the true children of Abraham. He shall likewise conciliate peace between Jew and Gentile, make of both one people, (Eph. ii. 13—16,) pulling down the walls of separation and prejudice, that with one heart and mind they may love, serve, and praise him. For where faith in him obtains, all distinctions are lost and superseded. There is then, neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all, and in all, Col. iii. 11.

Much has been already done by the gospel. Multitudes have been turned from darkness to light, and from the worship of dumb idols to serve the living and true God. And we expect a time when this promise will be more extensively and literally fulfilled; when the kingdom shall be the Lord's to the end of the earth; when the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, all Israel shall be saved, and the nations shall learn war no more.

From these characters of the Saviour, we may collect the character of his people. For they beholding his glory, are changed (according to the measure of their faith) into the same image. The incommunicable perfections of God, such as his sovereignty, and all-sufficiency, can only produce in his people correspondent impressions of reverence, submission, and dependence; an attempt to be like him in these respects would be highly impious, and was indeed the original source of our apostacy from him. Man, by indulging a desire of being like God, rebelled against him, aspired at independence, and preferred the gratification of his own will to the righteous and equitable commands of his Maker. The unavoidable consequence of this madness is misery. It is not possible that he should be happy, till he be reduced to his proper state of subordination. But that light of the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ, which is revealed to the renewed heart by the gospel, has a transforming effect upon those who receive it; they are made partakers of a divine nature, and resemble him, whose they are, and whom they serve, in righteousness, goodness, and truth, Eph. v. 9.

They are righteous as he is righteous. I speak not of their relative state, as they are accepted and accounted righteous in the Beloved, but of their real character. They learn of him to love righteousness and hate iniquity, Psalm xlv. 7. Their principles are right, drawn from the revealed truths of God. They comport themselves as becomes weak and unworthy sinners, and ascribe the glory of their salvation to the Lord alone; and therefore the general tenor of their conduct is governed by the righteous rules of his precepts; of which they have the most endearing and animating exemplification in the conduct of their Saviour; from him they learn to frame their tempers, desires, and hopes, and thus give evidence that they are, in deed and in truth, a saved people. His love, in proportion as it is realized in their hearts by faith, teaches them likewise to love one another, and to exercise benevolence to all men. When they understand the true nature of his spiritual kingdom, which consisteth not in external distinctions and forms, but in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; (Rom. xiv. 17;) and that it is his great design to form to himself a people from amongst the nations of the earth, who shall be one body, enlivened by one and the same spirit, they acquire a large and comprehensive mind. They rise above the influence of names, parties, and divisions; are

freed from the narrow views and interests of self; and put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering, forbearance, and forgiveness, (Col. iii. 12,) in conformity to the pattern and will of their great exemplar. Thus he speaks peace to them, and hushes all their angry tumultuous passions into a calm.

Such is the spirit and tendency of the gospel. Let us try ourselves by this touchstone, measure ourselves by this rule, and weigh ourselves in these balances of the sanctuary. They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, have put off the old man, and are renewed in the spirit of their minds. If he be indeed your King, your consciences will bear you witness that you revere, imitate, and obey him. If he be your Saviour, you certainly must be sensible yourselves, and others must observe that you are different from what you once were.

And if any of you should be convinced, that hitherto you have been a christian only in name and in form, but destitute of that which constitutes the life and power of real godliness, this will be a good beginning. For though it be high time that you should in good earnest attend to these things, blessed be God it is not yet too late. He is a righteous and a gracious Saviour; seek him as such, and he will speak peace to you also. His sure promise is recorded for your encouragement, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out," John vi. 37.

SERMON XII.

EFFECTS OF MESSIAH'S APPEARANCE.

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped: Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing.—Is. xxxv. 5, 6.

How beautiful and magnificent is the imagery by which the prophet, in this chapter, represents the effects of Messiah's appearance! The scene, proposed to our view, is a barren and desolate wilderness. But when he, who in the beginning said "Let there be light, and there was light," condescends to visit this wilderness, the face of nature is suddenly changed by his presence. Fountains and streams of water burst forth in the burning desert, the soil becomes fruitful, clothed with verdure, and adorned with flowers. The towering cedars, which were the glory of Lebanon, and the richest pastures, which were the excellency of Carmel, present themselves to the eye, where, a little before, all was uncomfortable and dreary. How is it, that so few of those who value themselves upon their taste, and who profess to be admirers of pastoral poetry in particular, are struck with the elegance and beauty of this description? Alas, we can only ascribe their indifference to the depravity of the human heart. They would, surely, have admired this picture, could they have met with it in any of their favourite authors; but descriptive paintings in this style, so exquisitely combining grandeur with simplicity, are only to be found in the Bible, a book which their unhappy prejudices and passions too often lead them to depreciate and neglect. But they who have a scriptural and spiritual taste, not only admire this passage as a description of a pleasing change in outward nature, but consider it as a just and expressive representation of a more important, a moral change, of which they have themselves been, in a measure, the happy subjects. The barren wilderness reminds them of the state of mankind by the fall, and of their own hearts, before Messiah, the Sun of righteousness, arose upon them with healing, with light, power, and comfort, in his beams. In that memorable hour, old things passed away, and all things became new. The Lord, by shining into their hearts, and showing them his glory in the person of Christ, has created for them a new heaven and a new earth. The works of God around them in his creation and providence assume a different appearance. Before, they lived without him in the world, but now, they see his hand wherever they look, they hear his voice in every event; for now the principles of his grace are planted in their souls, and they are no longer barren nor unfruitful, but are filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to his praise, Phil. i. 11.

The verses which I have read exhibit the effects of Messiah's power and goodness, by another image equally pleasing. Not only the wilderness, but the inhabitants of the wilderness partake of the virtue of the great Redeemer. He finds them in circumstances of distress, which he only can relieve. But when he comes the blind receive their sight, the deaf hear, the lame walk, and the dumb have voices given them to resound his praise. These mighty works, in their literal sense, marked his character, and confirmed his claims when he was upon earth; and to these he himself appealed in proof of his being the promised Saviour whom the prophets had foretold, and that no other was to be expected, Matt. xi. 3—6.

But the words have a still more sublime and important sense. As the great Physician, he cured all manner of bodily diseases and infirmities. But this was not the principal design for which he came into the world. The maladies to which sin has subjected the body, are but emblems of the more dreadful evils which it has brought upon the soul. He came to open the eyes of the mind; to make the obstinate will attentive and obedient to

the voice of God; to invigorate our benumbed and paralytic faculties, that we may be active and cheerful in his service; and to open our lips, that our mouths may show forth his praise. I have a good hope that I may warrantably say, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears," Luke iv. 21. Some of you who were once darkness, are now light in the Lord.

These different effects are produced by one simple, but powerful operation. While Lazarus lay in the grave, all his natural powers were inactive. But when the voice of the Son of God restored him to life, (John xi. 43,) he was, of course, immediately enabled to see, to hear, to move, and to speak. Thus, while we were spiritually dead, we were necessarily blind, deaf, dumb, and motionless, with respect to all the objects and faculties of that life of God in the soul, which is the perfection and honour of our nature. When we are made partakers of this life, by a new and heavenly birth, then our spiritual senses are brought into exercise, then the eyes of the blind are opened, to see the beauty and glory of divine truths: we hear the voice of God, we feel a liberty to walk and act in his service, and our tongues are taught to praise him. Here are four chief effects of a work of grace upon the heart, which distinguish believers from the rest of mankind.

And these effects are all to be ascribed to Messiah. For they are all wrought by the agency of his Holy Spirit. The gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, which are absolutely necessary, as well for the perpetuating of his gospel from age to age, as for making it efficacious and successful, are bestowed upon sinners wholly upon the account of his mediation. It was, when he ascended on high and led captivity captive, that he procured these blessings for rebellious men, that the Lord God might dwell among them, Psal. lxviii. 18. And it was only for his sake, and on the account of what he has to accomplish in the fulness of time, as intimated in the promise of the seed of the woman appointed to bruise the serpent's head, that there were any gracious communications afforded to fallen man, from the first entrance of sin into the world. But now the Redeemer's great work is fulfilled, his salvation is more openly revealed and applied by the publication of the gospel, with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven, and sinners hear the voice of God and live. Then all the changes prefigured and predicted in my text take place, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field.

1. They were once blind, but now they see. The religion of true believers is not the effect of imagination and blind impulse, but is derived from a solid knowledge, which will bear the strictest scrutiny, and is the reasonable service of an enlightened understanding. They see God; their apprehensions of him are, in some measure, answerable to his greatness and his goodness, and inspire them with reverence and love. Their conceptions of other things, in which they are most nearly interested, are agreeable to the truth. Sin appears to them hateful in itself, as well as mischievous in its consequences; and holiness, not only necessary by the ordination of God, but desirable for its own sake, as essentially belonging to the true dignity and happiness of man. They know themselves; they see and feel that they are such creatures as the Bible describes them to be, weak, depraved, and vile. Of course, they see the folly of attempting to recommend themselves to God, and can no longer place any dependence on what they once accounted their wisdom, power, or righteousness; and therefore they see the absolute necessity of a Saviour. They see, likewise, and approve the method of salvation proposed by the gospel, as worthy of the wisdom and justice of God, and every way adapted to the exigencies of their sins, wants, and fears. They see and admire the excellence, dignity, and sufficiency of him, on whom their help is laid. His power and authority engage their confidence, his love captivates and fixes their hearts. They see the vanity of the present state, and the vast importance of eternity. In these respects they have all of them a good understanding, however inferior in natural capacity or acquired knowledge to the wise men of the world.

2. Their knowledge, so far as they have attained, is not merely speculative, cold, and indistinct, like the light of the moon. The Sun of righteousness has shined into their hearts. The light they enjoy is vital, cheering, and effective. Because they thus see, they hear likewise. They were once deaf to the voice of God, whether he spoke by his word or his providence, whether in the language of mercy or judgment. But now their deaf ears are unstopped. They are now attentive, submissive, and willing to receive his instructions, and to obey his commands. With them, one "Thus saith the Lord," has the force of a thousand arguments. They desire no farther proof of a doctrine, no other warrant for their practice, no other reason for any dispensation, than Thus the Lord has said, This he requires, and, This is his appointment. Thus their wills are brought into subjection; and they so understand, as to believe and obey.

3. Farther, with their sight and hearing they receive power and activity. Once they were tied and bound in the chain of their sins, or like a man benumbed with a dead palsy, unable to move. If they sometimes seemed to express desires that might be called good with respect to their object, they were faint and ineffectual. But now their fetters are broken, the health and strength of their souls are restored, and God has wrought in them not

only to will but also to do according to his good pleasure, Phil. ii. 13. It is not more wonderful that a cripple should suddenly recover the use of his limbs, than that a person who has long been fettered in sinful habits should be enabled to move and act with alacrity in the service of God. But in the day of divine power sinners are made both willing and able. How burdensome was that which they once accounted their religion! how little comfort did it yield them! how little did it assist them against their passions or against their fears! But all things are become new, since they have attained to a life of faith in the Son of God. Their religious service is now pleasant, and their warfare against sin and the world victorious. Their obligations, motives, resources, encouragements,and prospects inspire them with a holy vigour to run, with patience and perseverance, the race that is set before them.

4. Having their sight and hearing thus restored, and their hearts enlarged to walk at liberty in the ways of wisdom, they are no longer dumb, silent, and sullen, but, out of the abundance of their hearts, their mouths speak the language of gratitude, praise, and joy. For though most people have the faculty of speech, and can use, or rather abuse their tongues fluently; though we are sufficiently expert from our childhood, in the dialects of falsehood, profaneness, and folly; yet, by nature, we are dumb with respect to the language that becomes us, as the creatures of God, and as those who have sinned against him, and yet are invited to seek his mercy. But when grace teaches the heart, then the heart teaches the mouth, Prov. xvi. 23. When we believe, then we speak, yea, we sing and greatly rejoice; as it is written, "In that day I will praise thee; though thou wast angry, thine anger is turned away," Isa. xii. 1. And again, "The voice of joy and thanksgiving is in the tabernacles of the righteous," Psal. cxviii. 15. "Let the redeemed of the Lord say, That he is good, and his mercy endureth for ever, Psal." cvii. 1, 2

It is of great importance to examine ourselves by this test, and not to be satisfied with our knowledge of the gospel, any farther than our consciences bear us witness, that it has produced a real moral change in our tempers, conduct, and pursuits. For there is a knowledge which is falsely so called. It puffeth up, but edificth not. Our Lord's declaration deserves our most serious attention: "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not may see, and that they which see, might be made blind," John ix. 39. It is very possible, yea, very easy, by the help of books, sermons, and converse, to acquire an orderly and systematic knowledge of divine truths; it may be learnt thus, like any other branch of human science, and the head be well stored with orthodox sentiments; and there may be an ability to prove and defend them, in a way of argumentation, while the heart is utterly a stranger to their salutary influence. Such characters are too common. None make a greater parade and boast of seeing than these persons. None are more fatally blinded. They smile with disdain when they speak of a self-righteousness founded upon prayers, alms-deeds, and sacraments, but are not aware that they themselves live in the very spirit of the Pharisees, (Luke xviii. 2,) so clearly described and so expressly condemned in the New Testament. Their supposed knowledge of the doctrines which they misunderstand and abuse, is the righteousness on which they build their hopes; and trusting to this, they despise all those who are stricter in practice than themselves, as ignorant and legal, and discover almost as great dislike to close and faithful preaching as they could do to poison. Though the doctrines of the gospel, when rightly received, are productive of godliness, it is to be feared there are people who espouse and plead for them to quiet their consciences, by furnishing them with excuses for the sins they are unwilling to forsake. It is not surprising that they who are displeased with the yoke of our Lord's precepts should seem friendly to the idea of salvation without the works of the law. The notion of the final perseverance of believers may afford a pillow for those to rest on, who, being at present destitute of all feeling of spiritual life, labour to persuade themselves, that they are christians, because they had some serious thoughts, and made some profession of the truth, many years ago. So likewise, in what the scriptures teach of the total inability of fallen man, they think they have a plea to justify their negligence and sloth, and therefore are not disposed to contradict the testimony. The invitation and command to wait, and watch, and strive in the ways and means of the Lord's appointment, they evade, as they think, with impunity, by confessing the charge, and saying, I am a poor creature indeed, I can do nothing of myself aright, and therefore to what purpose should I attempt to do any thing? A minister may preach upon these points, in general terms, and obtain their good word. But if he speaks plainly and faithfully to conscience; if he bears testimony not only against dead works, but against a dead faith,—against spiritual pride, evil tempers, evil speaking, love of the world, and sinful compliances; if he insists that the branches of the true vine should bear grapes, and not the same fruit as the bramble; hearers of this stamp will think they do God service by censuring all he can say as low and legal trash. How awful! that people should be blinded by the very truths which they profess to believe! Yet I fear such cases are too frequent. God grant a delusion of this kind

may never be found amongst us! For if the salt itself should lose its savour, wherewith shall it be salted! Matt. v. 13. May we come simply to the light, with a desire of seeing more of ourselves, and more of our Saviour, that we may be more humble and spiritual, more afraid of sin, more watchful and successful in striving against it, and, in our whole conversation, more conformable to our glorious Head!

But to return:—From what has been offered upon this subject we may observe,

1. That true christianity is friendly to society, and to the common interests of mankind. It is the source of peace, tenderness, benevolence, and every humane temper. It is calculated to soothe the fierce disposition, to enlarge the selfish spirit, and to transform the lion into the lamb. What then must we think of those pretended friends to liberty and free inquiry, whose unhappy zeal is employed to rob us of the only light and balm of life! who, by their misrepresentations and cavils, endeavour to persuade others, though they cannot effectually persuade themselves, that the gospel, a scheme so wise in its constitution, so salutary in its design, so powerful in its effects, is no better than an imposition, the contrivance of superstitious or artful men! Why should they attempt to take away the foundation of our hope and the spring of our comfort, (if they were able,) when they know they have nothing to substitute in their place! Let us think of them with that compassion which their state calls for, and pray for them, if peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth, 2 Tim. ii. 25.

2. The change thus wrought is great, marvellous, and, if not so frequent, might be styled miraculous. It is more than education, example, persuasion, or resolution can perform. It is the work of God alone to open the blind eyes, to change the heart of stone into flesh, and to raise the dead.

This thought should exclude boasting. The happy subjects of this change were no better by nature or practice than others. They have nothing but what they have received. The glory and praise is due to the Lord alone. It should likewise soften their censure of those who are still in a state of alienation from God, or at least prevent the emotions of anger and resentment towards them. They know not what they do. Their danger should excite our pity and our friendly endeavours to recover them from the error of their way. And, especially, we should be careful so to regulate our behaviour, that, if they obey not the word, they may without the word be convinced and won (1 Pet. iii. 1) by the force of our example. If the Lord be pleased to do that for them which he has done for us, their dislike of us, and their opposition to us, will be quickly at an end; and though they set out after us, they may possible make a swifter progress in the christian life than we have done. Thus, though Saul of Tarsus approached Damascus as an enemy and a persecutor, when the scales fell from his eyes, he not only immediately joined the disciples, but in a little time became a pattern to them.

That the change is the work of God, should likewise be considered by those who, from a sense of the greatness of their sins, and the strength of their sinful habits, are ready to sink into despair. Whatever apparent difficulty there may be in your case, it is easy to divine power. All things are possible with God, (Mark x. 27,) and all things, likewise, are possible to him that believeth, Mark ix. 23. The promises invite you to apply to him who is the author and finisher of faith, and who has said for your encouragement, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in nowise cast out."

SERMON XIII.

THE GREAT SHEPHERD.

He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.—Isa. xl. 11.

It is not easy for those whose habits of life are insensibly formed by the customs of modern times, to conceive any adequate idea of the pastoral life, as it obtained in the eastern countries, before that simplicity of manners, which characterized the early ages, was corrupted by the artificial and false refinements of luxury. Wealth, in those days, consisted principally in flocks and herds, and Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and others, who were, to speak in modern language, persons of high distinction, were likewise shepherds. The book of Genesis, which is an authentic and infallible history of the most ancient times, exhibits a manner of living so different from our own, that, perhaps, few persons are qualified to enter fully into the spirit of the description. The poets seem to have derived their idea of the golden age from some imperfect tradition of this primitive state; and, if we compare it with the state of things around us, methinks we have reason to say, "How is the gold become dim, and the fine gold changed!" Lam. iv. 1. The opulence of Jacob may be conjectured from the present he sent to his brother Esau, Gen. xxxii. 14, 15. Yet Jacob attended his flocks himself, in the drought by day, and in the frost by night, Gen. xxxi. 40. The vigilance, the providence, the tenderness, necessary to the due discharge of the shepherd's office, have been frequently applied in describing the nature and ends of

government: and it has been esteemed a high encomium of a good king, to style him the shepherd of his people. This character Messiah, the Saviour, condescends to bear; and happy are they, who, with a pleasing consciousness, can say, "We are his people and the sheep of his pasture," Psal. c. 3.

The passage will lead me to speak of the shepherd, the flock, and his care and tenderness over them.

I. Our Lord expressly styles himself the *Shepherd*, the *good Shepherd of the Sheep*, (John x. 11, 14,) and the apostle Peter styles him the *chief Shepherd*, 1 Peter v. 4. His faithful ministers have the honour to be under-shepherds; he appoints, and qualifies them to feed his flock. They are the messengers of his will, but they can do nothing without him; they can only communicate what they receive, and cannot watch over the flock, unless they are themselves watched over by him, Psal. cxxvii. 1. For, with respect to efficacy, he is the chief, and, indeed, the sole Shepherd. The eyes of all are upon him, and his eye is upon, and over all his flock. The Old-Testament church had a shepherd, and their shepherd was Jehovah, Psal. xxiii. 1. Unless, therefore, the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls likewise be Jehovah, we fall unspeakably short of the privilege of ancient Israel, if their Shepherd was almighty, and if ours could be but a creature. Surely we could not then say, what yet the apostle affirms, that we have a better covenant, established upon better promises; (Heb. viii. 6;) since Messiah himself is expressly declared to be the surety and the mediator of this covenant. But would it not be better, upon this supposition, with David, who could say, "Jehovah is my Shepherd," than with us, who are entrusted to the care of a delegated and inferior keeper, if Jesus be not Jehovah! Besides, who but Jehovah can relieve the necessities of multitudes in all places, in the same moment, and be equally near and attentive to them in every age? The sinner, who is enlightened to know himself, his wants, enemies, and dangers, will not dare to confide in any thing short of an almighty arm; he needs a shepherd, who is full of wisdom, full of care, full of power; able, like the sun, to shine upon millions at once, and possessed of those incommunicable attributes of Deity, omniscience and omnipresence. Such is our great Shepherd; and he is eminently the good Shepherd also, for he laid down his life for the sheep, and has redeemed them to God by his own blood.

II. A *shepherd* is a relative name; it has reference to a *flock*. This great and good Shepherd has a flock, whom he loved from everlasting, and whom, having loved, he will love to the end, John xiii. 1.

Formosi pecoris custos, formosior ipse!

He humbled himself for their sakes, submitted to partake of their nature and their sorrows, took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. He died for his sheep, the just for the unjust, (1 Pet. iii. 18,) to redeem them from the curse of the law, from the guilt and dominion of sin, from the power of Satan, and to bring them to God. They, by nature, are all gone astray, every one to his own way; (Isa. liii. 6;) but having thus bought them with his blood, in his own appointed time, he seeks, finds, and restores his sheep. By the power of his word and Spirit, he makes himself known to their hearts, causes them to hear and understand his voice, and guides them into his fold. Then they become his sheep in the sense of my text. They are under his immediate protection and government.

Considered as individuals, they are fitly described by the name of sheep. A sheep is a weak, defenceless, improvident creature; prone to wander, and if once astray, is seldom known to return of its own accord. A sheep has neither strength to fight with the wolf, nor speed to escape from him; nor has it the foresight of the ant, to provide its own sustenance. Such is our character, and our situation. Unable to take care of ourselves, prone to wander from our resting place, exposed to enemies which we can neither withstand nor avoid, without resource in ourselves, and taught by daily experience, the insufficiency of every thing around us: yet, if this Shepherd be our Shepherd, weak and helpless as we are, we may be of good courage. If we can say with David, "The Lord is my Shepherd," we may make the same inferences which he did, "Therefore I shall not want;" therefore I need not fear.

Collectively they are a flock. They are not, indeed, in one place. They are scattered abroad, dispersed through different ages and countries, separated by seas and mountains, and, too often, by misapprehensions and prejudices, by names and forms; and only a very small part of the flock are known to each other. But they are all equally known to him, and equally under his eye. In his view they are one flock, one body; they are animated by one and the same spirit; their views, hopes, and aims are the same; and, yet a little while, they shall be all brought together, a number without number, to rejoice and to join in worship, before his throne of glory. For they have an inheritance reserved for them in heaven; (1 Pet. i. 4, 5;) and they shall be safely kept, while they are sojourners upon earth, for the Shepherd of Israel is their keeper.

III. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd. The word is not restrained to feeding. It includes all the branches of the shepherd's office. He shall act the part of a shepherd to his flock. We have a beautiful miniature description of what he has engaged to do, and

what he actually does, for his people, as their Shepherd, in the twenty-third Psalm. And the subject is more largely illustrated in the thirty-fourth chapter of Ezekiel's prophecy. His sheep, from age to age, have been witnesses to the truth of his promises. He has a flock at present who rejoice in his care, and greater multitudes, as yet unborn, shall successively arise in their appointed seasons, and call him blessed, Psal. lxxii. 17. For he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

He feeds them.—He leads them into green and pleasant pastures. These pastures are his word and ordinances, by which he communicates to them of his own fulness; for in strict propriety of speech, he himself is their food. They eat his flesh and drink his blood, John vi. 54. This was once thought a hard saying, (John vi. 58,) by some of his professed followers, and is still thought so by too many. But it is his own saying, and therefore I am not concerned either to confirm or to vindicate it. The knowledge they receive by faith, of his incarnation and sufferings unto death, of the names he bears, and of the offices and relations in which he is pleased to act for them, is the life and food of their souls. The expression of feeding them, is agreeable to the analogy he has been pleased to establish between the natural and the spiritual life. As the strength of the body is maintained and renewed by eating and drinking; so they who, in this sense, feed upon him in their hearts by faith with thanksgiving, even they live (John vi. 57) by him; for his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed.

He guides them.—First, by his example. He has trodden the path of duty and trial before them; and they perceive and follow his footsteps. Again, by his word and Spirit he teaches them the way in which they should go; and both inclines and enables them to walk in it, Is. xxx. 21. He guides them, likewise, by his providence; he appoints the bounds of their habitations, the line and calling in which they are to serve him, and orders and adjusts the circumstances of their lives according to his infinite wisdom, so as finally to accomplish his gracious designs in their favour.

He guards them.—It is written concerning him, "He shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God," Micah v. 4. If we conceive of a flock of sheep feeding in the midst of wolves, who are restrained from breaking in upon them, not by any visible inclosure, but merely by the power of the shepherd's eye, which keeps them in awe and at a distance, it will give us some idea of the situation of his people. He provides them food in the midst of many and mighty enemies, (Psal. xxiii. 5,) who envy them their privilege, but cannot prevent it. If he should withdraw his attention from the flock for a single minute, they would be worried. But he has promised to keep them night and day, (Is. xxvii. 3,) and every moment; therefore their enemies plot and rage in vain. Their visible foes are numerous; but if we could look into the invisible world, and take a view of the subtilty, malice, machinations and assiduity of the powers of darkness, who are incessantly watching for opportunities of annoying them, we should have a most striking conviction, that a flock so defenceless and feeble in themselves, and against which such a combination is formed, can only be kept by the power of God.

He heals them.—A good shepherd will examine the state of his flock. But there is no attention worthy of being compared with his. Not the slightest circumstance in their concerns escapes his notice. When they are ready to faint, borne down with heavy exercises of mind, wearied with temptations, dry and disconsolate in their spirits, he seasonably revives them. Nor are they in heaviness without a need-be for it. All his dispensations towards them are medicinal, designed to correct, or to restrain, or to cure, the maladies of their souls. And they are adjusted, by his wisdom and tenderness, to what they can bear, and to what their case requires. It is he likewise, who heals their bodily sickness, and gives them help in all their temporal troubles. He is represented to us as counting their sighs, (Psal. lvi. 8,) putting their tears into his bottle, recording their sorrows in his book of remembrance; and even as being himself touched with a feeling of their infirmities, (Heb. iv. 15,) as the head feels for the members of the body.

He restores them.—The power and subtilty of their enemies are employed to force or entice them from his rule, and too often prevail for a season. The sheep turn aside into forbidden paths; and whenever they do, they would wander farther and farther, till they were quite lost again, if he were not their Shepherd. If he permits them to deviate, he has a time to convince them, that it was an evil and a bitter thing to forsake the Lord their Shepherd, (Jer. ii. 19,) and to humble them, and to bring them back. Thus they become more sensible of their own weakness, and of their obligations to his gracious care; for he will not suffer their enemies to triumph over them. He will not lose one of his true flock; not one convinced sinner, who has, in deed and in truth, surrendered and entrusted his all to him. They must, and they shall smart and mourn for their folly; but he will, in due season, break their snares, and lead them again into the paths of peace, for his own name's sake.

The flock are not all sheep. There are among them lambs. These are especially mentioned, and for these he expresses a peculiar tenderness. He will gather them in

his arm, and carry them in his bosom. Though they are weaklings, they shall not be left behind. This is a beautiful and pathetic image. If a poor lamb is weary, and unable to keep up with the flock, it shall be carried. This clause affords encouragement,

1. To young people.—Early serious impressions are often made upon the hearts of children, which we are to cherish, by directing their thoughts to the compassion of the good Shepherd, who has said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God," Mark x. 14. This high and holy one, who humbles himself to notice the worship of the heavenly host, hears the prayers of worms upon the earth; and his ear is open to the prayers of a child, no less so, than to the prayer of a king.

2. To young converts.—These, at whatever age, are children in the Lord's family, lambs in his flock. They are, as yet, weak, unsettled, and unexperienced. Almost every day brings them into a new and untried situation. They often meet with opposition and discouragement, where they have promised themselves help and countenance. Perhaps their nearest friends are displeased with them. They are liable, likewise, while they are inquiring the way to Zion, to be perplexed by the various opinions and angry contentions prevailing among the different religious persons or parties to whom they may address themselves. They are frequently discouraged by the falls and miscarriages of professors, some of whom, it is possible, they may have admired, and looked up to, as patterns for their own imitation. Add to these things, what they suffer from new and unexpected discoveries of the evil and deceitfulness of their hearts; the mistakes they commit, in judgment and practice, for want of a more solid and extensive knowledge of the scriptures; and the advantage the great enemy of their souls derives from these their various difficulties to assault their peace and obstruct their progress. What would become of them in such circumstances, if their faithful Shepherd had not promised to lead, and uphold them, with the arm of his power!

There is, likewise, particular mention made of "those who are with young." These he will gently lead. If we take the word according to our version, it may signify a state of conviction or trouble. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, (Psal. xxxiv. 19,) by which they are often wearied and heavy laden. But when their spirits are overwhelmed within them, he knoweth their path. Jacob would not permit his cattle that were with young to be over-driven for one day, lest they should die, Gen. xxxiii. 13. Much less will this good Shepherd suffer the burdened among his flock to be hurried and tempted beyond what they are able, or what he will enable them to bear.

But the word signifies, those that have young, rather than those that are with young. Two sorts of persons in the Lord's flock, who come under this description, feel an especial need of his compassion, tenderness, and patience.

1. He only knows the feelings of the hearts of parents; what solicitude and anxiety they have for their young ones, the sucklings, if I may so speak, of the flock, which mingle with all their endeavours, to manage rightly the important charge committed to them, and to bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

2. Ministers, likewise, have painful exercises of mind. The apostle Paul speaks of travailing in birth again, till Christ be formed in our hearers, Gal. iv. 19. When we know of any newly awakened, and beginning to seek his salvation, how solicitous is our care to bring them forward, to comfort them, to warn them against the devices of their hearts, and of their enemies! And how piercing our grief and disappointment, if they miscarry! How much is felt in sympathy for the trials of the flock! What wisdom, faithfulness, courage, meekness, and unction from on high, are necessary to the due discharge of what we owe to the flocks of which we have the oversight! Who is sufficient for these things! And when we have done our best, our all, what defects and defilements have we to mourn over! But this is our great consolation, that he who knows us, and leads us, considers our frame, and remembers that we are but dust.

In this delineation of the character and conduct of the great Shepherd of the sheep, (Heb. xiii. 20,) we have an affecting exemplar and pattern, for the imitation of those who act in the honourable office of undershepherds, and are called, by their profession and engagement, to feed his sheep and lambs. Whether there be any ministers in our assembly, or not, you will at least permit me to speak a word to my own heart; which may, I hope, at the same time, impress your minds with a sense of our great need of your prayers. Brethren, pray for us! (1 Thes. v. 25;) and pray to the Lord of the harvest, that he may send forth more faithful labourers into his harvest, Matt. ix. 38. For it is his work alone. It is not necessary, that a minister of the gospel should be in the first line of those who are admired for their abilities or literature; much less that he should be distinguished by such titles, honours, and emoluments as this world can give. But it is necessary, and of the last importance to his character and usefulness here, and to his acceptance in the great day of the Lord, that he should have a shepherd's eye and a shepherd's heart. He must serve the flock, no

for filthy lucre, or by constraint (that constraint, which the apostle attributes to the love of Christ, only excepted,) but willingly, and with a view to their edification, 1 Pet. v. 2, 3. And he must, indeed, serve them, not acting as a lord over God's heritage, but as an example to the flock; not preaching himself, (2 Cor. iv. 5,) perverting his sacred office to the purposes of ambition or vain glory, or the acquisition of wealth; but preaching Christ Jesus the Lord, and employing all his powers to turn sinners from the error of their ways. He who winneth souls is wise, Prov. xi. 30. If it be wisdom to propose the noblest end, the faithful minister is wise; the end at which he aims, in subordination to the will and glory of God, is the salvation of souls; and the recovery of one immortal soul to the favour and image of God, is, and will at length be found, a greater and more important event, than the deliverance of a whole kingdom from slavery or temporal ruin. If it be wisdom to pursue a right end by the fittest means, he is wise; he knows the gospel of Christ to be the power of God, the appointed,the effectual, the only sufficient mean for his accomplishing his great purpose; therefore, however unfashionable it may be, he is not ashamed of it; he preaches it, and he glories in it. If it be an effect of wisdom, not to be deterred from the prosecution of a great and noble design, by the censure and dislike of weak and incompetent judges, the faithful minister is truly wise. He loves his fellow creatures, and would willingly please them for their good, but he cannot fear them, because he fears and serves the Lord. He looks forward, with desire, to the day of that solemn and general visitation, when the Shepherd and Bishop of souls shall himself appear, 1 Pet. ii. 25; v. 4. And if he may then stand among those who are pardoned and accepted in the Beloved, and receive the crown of life, which his Lord has promised to them that love him (2 Tim. iv. 8,)—this thought fully reconciles him to the trials of his situation; and however depreciated, misrepresented, opposed or ill-treated here, he can say, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God," Acts xx. 24.

There is a counter-part to this character described in strong and glowing language by the prophets. There are idol-shepherds, who feed not the flock, but themselves; (Ezek. xxxiv. 2;) who neither attempt to heal the sick, to strengthen the feeble, to bind up that which is broken, nor to recover that which has been driven away; shepherds (Isa. lvi. 10, 11,) who cannot understand, greedy, lovers of gain—and who, by a change of metaphor, are compared to slumbering watchmen, and dumb dogs that cannot bark. The New Testament teaches us to expect that such persons, under the name of ministers, will be found likewise in the visible church of Christ: men of corrupt minds (1 Tim. vi. 5; Rom. xvi. 18,) destitute of the truth, who serve not the Lord Jesus, but their own belly; men who are of the world (1 John iv. 5,) and speak of the world; and therefore the world heareth and favoureth them. But, alas!—neither the wretched slave who toils at the galley-oar, nor he that is doomed to labour in a deep mine, where the light of the sun never reaches him, nor the lunatic who howls in a chain, are such emphatical objects of our compassion, as the unhappy man who prostitutes the name and function of a minister of Christ to the gratification of his pride and avarice; and whose object is not the welfare of the flock, but the possession of the fleece, (Ezek. xxxiii. 7, 8;) who intrudes into the post of a watchman, but gives no alarm of the impending danger. If the scriptures be true; if the gospel be not indeed, as Pope Leo X. profanely styled it, *a lucrative fable;* the more he accumulates riches, the more he rises in dignity, the more his influence extends, the more he is to be commiserated. He may have the reward he seeks; he may be admired and flattered; he may for a season be permitted to withstand and discountenance the efforts of the Lord's faithful servants; he may shine in the accomplishments of a scholar or a courtier: but nothing less than repentance, and faith in the Redeemer, whose name and cause he has dishonoured, can finally screen him from the full effect of that terrible denunciation—"Wo to the idol-shepherd that forsaketh (or neglecteth) the flock: The sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: His arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened, Zech. xi. 17.

SERMON XIV.

REST FOR THE WEARY.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. MATT. xi. 28.

WHICH shall we admire most, the majesty, or the grace, conspicuous in this invitation? How soon would the greatest earthly monarch be impoverished, and his treasures utterly exhausted, if all that are poor and miserable had encouragement to apply freely to him, with a promise of relief fully answerable to their wants and wishes! But the riches of Christ are unsearchable and inexhaustible. If millions of millions of distressed sinners seek to him for relief, he has a sufficiency for them all. His mercy is infinite to pardon all

their sins; his grace is infinite to answer and exceed their utmost desires; his power is infinite, to help them in all their difficulties. A number without number have been thus waiting upon him, from age to age; and not one of them has been sent away disappointed and empty. And the streams of his bounty are still flowing, and still full. Thus the sun, his brightest material image, has been the source of light to the earth, and to all its inhabitants, from the creation; and will be equally so to all succeeding generations, till time shall be no more. There is, indeed, an appointed hour when the sun shall cease to shine, and the course of nature shall fail. But the true Sun, the Sun of Righteousness, has no variableness or shadow of turning; (Mal. iv. 2; James i. 17;) and they who depend upon him while in this world, shall rejoice in his light for ever. Can we hesitate to accept of these words, as affording a full proof of the divine character, the proper Godhead of our Lord and Saviour; supposing only, that he meant what he said, and that he is able to make his promise good? Can a creature, however excellent and glorious, use this language? Can a creature discharge the debts, soothe the distresses, and satisfy the desires of every individual who looks to him? Who, but the Lord God (Psal. cxlvi. 8; Isa. lxi. 2,) can raise up all that are bowed down, and comfort all that mourn!

Again, as is his majesty, so is his mercy. In acts of grace amongst men there are always some limitations. If a king proclaims a pardon to a rebellious nation, there are still exceptions. Some ringleaders are excluded. Either their crimes were too great to be forgiven, or their obstinacy or influence are supposed to be too great to render their safety consistent with the safety of the state. But the Saviour excludes none but those who wilfully exclude themselves. As no case is too hard for his power, so no person who applies to him is shut out from his compassion. Him that cometh to him, whatever his former character or conduct may have been, he will in no wise cast out, John vi. 37. This glorious exercise of sovereign mercy is no less a divine attribute, than the power by which he created the heavens and the earth. It is the consideration of his mercy in pardoning sin, and in saving sinners, which causes that admiring exclamation of the prophet, "Who is a God like unto thee!" Micah vii. 18.

This passage (including the two following verses) closes the first part of the Oratorio. In tracing the series of the scriptures thus far, we have considered several signal prophecies which foretold his appearance; we have seen their accomplishment in his birth, and have (I hope) joined with the heavenly host, in ascribing glory to God in the highest, for this unspeakable gift and effect of his love. We have learnt from the prophets, his characters, as the great Restorer, and the great Shepherd. The evangelist proposes him to our meditation here, in a gracious and inviting attitude, as opening his high commission, proclaiming his own sovereign authority and power, and declaring his compassionate purpose, and readiness to give refreshment and rest to the weary and heavy laden.

The two principal points in the text are, the invitation and the promise.

I. The invitation is expressed in very general terms: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden." There is no qualifying or restraining clause, to discourage any person who is willing to accept it. Whoever hath an ear to hear, let him hear. "Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely," Rev. xxii. 17. I cannot doubt but these words authorise me to address myself to every person in this assembly. I speak first to you who are spending your money for that which satisfieth not, (Isa. lv. 2;) who are wearied in seeking happiness where it is not to be found, and in digging pits, and hewing out cisterns for yourselves, which can hold no water, (Jer. ii. 13,) and have hitherto been regardless of the fountain of living waters, which is always near you. While you are pursuing the wealth or honours of this world, or wasting your time and strength in the indulgence of sensual appetites, and look no higher, are you indeed happy and satisfied? Do you find the paths in which you are led, or rather hurried and driven on, to be the paths of pleasantness and peace? Prov. iii. 7. With what face can you charge the professors of religion with hypocrisy, if you pretend to satisfaction in these ways? We have trodden them far enough ourselves, to be assured that there are feelings in your heart which contradict your assertion. You know that you are not happy, and we know it likewise. Are you quite strangers to a secret wish that you had never been born? or that you could change condition with some of the brute creation? Are you not heavy laden, burdened with guilt, and fears, and forebodings, harassed with crosses, disappointments, and mortifications? Are you not often, at least sometimes, like children in the dark, afraid of being alone, unable to support the reflections that are forced upon you in a solitary hour, when you have nothing to amuse you! And while you seem so alert and upon the wing after every kind of dissipation within your reach, is not a chief motive that impels you, a desire, if possible, of hiding yourselves from yourselves, and of calling off your attention from those thoughts which, like vultures, are ready to seize you, and prey upon you, the moment they find you unemployed! And how often do your poor expedients fail you, especially in time of trouble, or on a sick-bed? What

comfort does the world afford you then? What relief do you then derive from the companions of your vain and gay hours? Most probably, at such a season, they stand aloof from you; the house of mourning, or the chamber of sickness, is no less unpleasing to them than to yourself. They do not choose the pain of being reminded, by a sight of your distress, how soon the case may be their own. Or, if they visit you, you find them miserable comforters. But I have to speak to you of one who is able to comfort you in all seasons, and under all circumstances; whose favour is better than life. And will you still refuse to hear his voice? What hard thing does the Lord require of you? Only to come to him for that peace and rest to which you have hitherto been strangers. But though you are invited, I know that of yourselves you will not come; you will not, and therefore you cannot. Be assured, however, the invitation does not mock you, and, if you finally refuse it, the fault will lie at your own doors. But may I not hope you will refuse no longer? The preaching of the gospel is his appointment, and has a great effect, when accompanied with the energy of his Holy Spirit, to make a willing people in the day of his power.

There are others, however, to whom this invitation speaks more directly. The convinced sinner is heavy laden with the guilt of sin, and wearied with ineffectual strivings against it. He is weary of the yoke and burden of the law, when he can neither answer its commands with cheerful and acceptable obedience, nor see any way of escaping the penalty which is due to transgressors. He sighs earnestly and anxiously for pardon and liberty. If he has an interval of comparative peace and hope, it is more derived from some occasional fervour and liveliness in the frame of his spirit, than from the exercise of faith; and therefore, as that fervour abates (and it will not always remain at the same height,) his fears return. If in such a favoured moment he feels little solicitation or trouble from the evil propensities of his heart, he is willing to hope they are subdued, and that they will trouble him no more; but his triumph is short, the next return of temptation revives all his difficulties, and he is again brought into bondage. For nothing but the knowledge of the Saviour, and the supplies of his Spirit, can give stable peace to the mind, or victory over sin. A repetition of these disappointments and changes fixes a heavy burden and distress upon the mind. But here is help provided exactly suitable to the case. Comply with this invitation, come to him and he will surely give you rest.

But what is it to come to Christ? It is to believe in him, to apply to him, to make his invitation and promise our ground and warrant for putting our trust in him. On another occasion, he said, "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst," John vi. 35. The expressions are of the same import. When he was upon earth, many who came to him, and even followed him for a season, received no saving benefit from him. Some came to him from motives of malice and ill-will, to ensnare or insult him. Some followed him for loaves and fishes; and of others, who were frequently near him, he complained, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life," John v. 40. But they who were distressed, and came to him for relief, were not disappointed. To come to him, therefore, implies a knowledge of his power and an application for his help. To us he is not visible, but he is always near us; and as he appointed his disciples to meet him in Galilee (Matthew, xxviii. 16,) previous to his ascension, so he has promised to be found of those who seek him, and wait for him, in certain means of his own institution. He is seated upon a throne of grace; he is to be sought in his word, and where his people assemble in his name; for he has said, There will I be in the midst of them, Matt. xviii. 20. They therefore who read his word, frequent his ordinances, and pray unto him, with a desire that they may know him, and be remembered with the favour which he beareth to his own people (Psal. cvi. 4,) answer the design of my text. They come to him, and he assures them, that whoever they are, he will in no-wise cast them out. If they thus come to him, they will of course come out from the world and be separate, 2 Cor. vi. 17. If they apply to him for refuge, they will renounce all other refuge and dependence, and trust in him alone, according to the words of the prophet, "Ashur shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses, neither will we say any more to the works of our hands, Ye are our gods, for in thee the fatherless (the helpless and comfortless) findeth mercy," Hosea xiv. 3.

II. The promise is, "I will give you rest." The word signifies both rest and refreshment. He gives a relief and cessation from former labour and bondage, and superadds a peace, a joy, a comfort, which revives the weary spirit, and proves itself to be that very satisfaction which the soul had been ignorantly, and in vain, seeking amongst the creatures and the objects of sense.

This rest includes a freedom from the forebodings and distressing accusations of a guilty conscience; from the long and fruitless struggle between the will and the judgment; from the condemning power of the law; from the tyranny of irregular and inconsistent appetites; and from the dominion of pride and self, which make us unhappy in ourselves, and hated and despised by others. A freedom likewise from the cares and anxieties which, in such an uncertain world as this, disquiet

the minds of those who have no solid scriptural dependence upon God, and especially a freedom from the dread of death, and of the things which are beyond it. In these and other respects, the believer in Jesus enters into a present rest. He is under the guidance of infinite wisdom and the protection of almighty power; he is permitted to cast all his cares upon the Lord, (1 Pet. v. 7,) and is assured that the Lord careth for him. So far as he possesses by faith the spirit and liberty of his high calling, he is in perfect peace. The prophet Jeremiah has given a beautiful description and illustration of this rest of a believer; (Jer. xvii. 5—8;) which is rendered more striking by being contrasted with the miserable state of those who live without God in the world. "Thus saith the Lord, Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh, but shall inhabit the parched places of the wilderness, in a salt land not inhabited. But blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is; for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when the heat cometh; but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

But besides rest, there is refreshment. There are pleasures and consolations in that intercourse and communion with God to which we are invited by the gospel, which, both in kind and degree, are unspeakably superior to all that the world can bestow, and such as the world cannot deprive us of; for they have no necessary dependence upon outward situation or circumstances; they are compatible with poverty, sickness, and sufferings. They are often most sensibly sweet and lively when the streams of creature-comfort are at the lowest ebb. Many have been able to say with the apostle, "As the sufferings of Christ (those which we endure for his sake, or submit to from his hand) abound in us, so our consolation in Christ also aboundeth," 1 Cor. i. 5. The all-sufficient God can increase these communications of comfort from himself to a degree beyond our ordinary conceptions, so as not only to support his people under the most exquisite pains, but even to suspend and overpower all sense of pain, when the torment would otherwise be extreme. And he has sometimes been pleased to honour the fidelity of his servants, and to manifest his own faithfulness to them by such an interposition. One well-attested instance our own martyrology affords, that of Mr. Bainham, who suffered in the reign of Queen Mary. When he was in the fire, he addressed himself to his persecutors to this effect: "You call for miracles in the proof of our doctrine; now behold one; I feel no more pain from these flames than if I was laid upon a bed of roses." But in ordinary cases, and in all cases, they who taste how good the Lord is to them that seek him, how he cheers them with the light of his countenance, and what supports he affords them in the hour of need, can without regret part with the poor perishing pleasures of sin, and encounter all the difficulties they meet with in the path of duty. Whatever their profession of his name, and their attachment to his cause may have cost them, they will acknowledge that it has made them ample amends.

Come, therefore, unto him, venture upon his gracious word, and you shall find rest for your souls. Can the world outbid this gracious offer? Can the world promise to give you rest when you are burdened with trouble? when your cisterns fail, and your gourds wither? or when you are terrified with the approach of death, when your pulse intermits, when you are about to take a final farewell of all you ever saw with your eyes, and an awful, unknown, untried, unchangeable eternity is opening upon your view? Such a moment most certainly awaits you; and when it arrives, if you die in your senses, and are not judicially given up to hardness and blindness of heart, you will assuredly tremble, if you never trembled before. O! be persuaded! May the Lord himself persuade you to be timely wise, to seek him now while he may be found, to call upon him while he is yet near, lest that dreadful threatening should be your portion; "Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh," Prov. i. 24, 26.

SERMON XV.

MESSIAH'S EASY YOKE.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. MATTH. xi. 29, 30.

THOUGH the influence of education and example may dispose us to acknowledge the gospel to be a revelation from God, it can only be rightly understood, or duly prized, by those persons who feel themselves in the circumstances of distress which it is designed to relieve. No Israelite would think of fleeing to a city of refuge, till, by having unwittingly slain a man, he was exposed to the resentment of the next of kin, the legal avenger of blood; but then, a sense of his danger would induce him readily to avail himself of

the appointed method of safety. The skill of a physician may be acknowledged, in general terms, by many: but he is applied to only by the sick, Matt. ix. 12. Thus our Saviour's gracious invitation to come to him for rest, will be little regarded, till we really feel ourselves weary and heavy laden. This is a principal reason why the gospel is heard with so much indifference. For though sin be a grievous illness, and a hard bondage, yet one effect of it is, a strange stupidity and infatuation, which renders us (like a person in a delirium) insensible of our true state. It is a happy time when the Holy Spirit, by his convincing power, removes that stupor, which, while it prevents us from fully perceiving our misery, renders us likewise indifferent to the only mean of deliverance. Such a conviction of the guilt and desert of sin, is the first hopeful symptom in a sinner's case; but it is necessarily painful and distressing. It is not pleasant to be weary and heavy-laden; but it awakens our attention to him who says, Come unto me, and I will give you rest, and makes us willing to take his yoke upon us.

Oxen are yoked to labour. From hence the yoke is a figurative expression to denote servitude. Our Lord seems to use it here, both to intimate our natural prejudices against his service, and to obviate them. Though he submitted to sufferings, reproach, and death for our sakes; though he invites us, not because he has need of us, but because we have need of him, and cannot be happy without him; yet our ungrateful hearts think unkindly of him. We conceive of him as a hard master; and suppose that if we engage ourselves to him, we must bid farewell to pleasure, and live under a continual restraint. His rule is deemed too strict, his laws too severe; and we imagine, that we could be more happy upon our own plans, than by acceding to his. Such unjust, unfriendly, and dishonourable thoughts of him, whose heart is full of tenderness, whose bowels melt with love, are strong proofs of our baseness, blindness, and depravity; yet still he continues his invitation, "Come unto me."—As if he had said, "Be not afraid of me. Only make the experiment, and you shall find, that what you have accounted my yoke, is true liberty; and that in my service which you have avoided as burdensome, there is no burden at all; for my ways are ways of pleasantness, and all my paths are peace." I have a good hope, that many of my hearers can testify, from their own happy experience, that (according to the beautiful expression in our liturgy) his service is perfect freedom.

If we are really Christians, Jesus is our Master, our Lord, and we are his servants. It is in vain to call him Lord, Lord, (Luke vi. 46,) unless we keep his commandments. They who know him will love him; and they who love him will desire to please him, not by a course of service of their own devising, but by accepting his revealed will as the standard and rule, to every part of which they endeavour to conform in their tempers and in their conduct. He is likewise our Master in another sense, that is, he is our great Teacher; if we submit to him as such, we are his disciples or scholars. We cannot serve him acceptably, unless we are taught by him. The philosophers of old had their disciples, who imbibed their sentiments, and were therefore called after their names, as the Pythagoreans and Platonists, from Pythagoras and Plato. The general name of Christians, which was first assumed by the believers at Antioch (possibly by divine direction) intimates that they are the professed disciples of Christ, Acts xi. 26. If we wish to be truly wise, to be wise unto salvation, we must apply to him. For in this sense, the disciple or scholar cannot be above his Master, Luke vi. 40. We can learn of men no more than they can teach us. But he says, "Learn of me;" and he cautions us against calling any one Master upon earth. He does, indeed, instruct his people by ministers and instruments; but unless he is pleased to superadd his influence, what we seem to learn from them only, will profit us but little. Nor are the best of them so thoroughly furnished, nor so free from mistake, as to deserve our implicit confidence. But they whom he condescends to teach, shall learn, what no instruction, merely human, can impart. Let us consider the peculiar, the unspeakable advantages of being his scholars.

1. In the first place, this great Teacher can give the capacity requisite to the reception of his sublime instructions. There is no prospect of excelling in human arts and sciences, without a previous natural ability, suited to the subject. For instance, if a person has not an ear and taste for music, he will make but small proficiency under the best masters. It will be the same with respect to the mathematics, or any branch of science. A skilful master may improve and inform the scholar if he be rightly disposed to learn, but he cannot communicate the disposition. But Jesus can open and enliven the dullest mind; he teaches the blind to see, and the deaf to hear. By nature we are untractable, and incapable of relishing divine truth, however advantageously proposed to us by men like ourselves. But happy are his scholars! he enables them to surmount all difficulties. He takes away the heart of stone, subdues the most obstinate prejudices, enlightens the dark understanding, and inspires a genius and a taste for the sublime and interesting lessons he proposes to them. In this respect, as in every other, there is none who teacheth like him, Job xxxvi. 26.

2. He teacheth the most important things. The subjects of human science are compara-

tively trivial and insignificant. We may be safely ignorant of them all. And we may acquire the knowledge of them all, without being wiser or better, with respect to the concernments of our true happiness. Experience and observation abundantly confirm the remark of Solomon, That he who increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing, Eccles. i. 8, 18. Unless the heart be seasoned and sanctified by grace, the sum-total of all other acquisitions is but vanity and vexation of spirit, Eccles. ii. 17. Human learning will neither support the mind under trouble, nor weaken its attachment to worldly things, nor control its impetuous passions, nor overcome the fear of death. The confession of the learned Grotius, towards the close of a life spent in literary pursuits, is much more generally known than properly attended to. He had deservedly a great name and reputation as a scholar; but his own reflection upon the results of his labours expresses what he learnt, not from his books and ordinary course of studies, but from the Teacher I am commending to you. He lived to leave this testimony for the admonition of the learned, or to this effect: *Ah, vitum prorsus perdidi nihil agendo laboriose!* "Alas! I have wasted my whole life in taking much pains to no purpose." But Jesus makes his scholars wise unto eternal life, and reveals that knowledge to babes, to persons of weak and confined abilities, of which the wisdom of the world can form no idea.

3. Other teachers, as I have already hinted, can only inform the head; but his instructions influence the heart. Moral philosophers, as they are called, abound in fine words and plausible speeches, concerning the beauty of virtue, the fitness of things, temperance, benevolence, and equity; and their scholars learn to talk after them. But their fine and admired sentiments are mere empty notions, destitute of life and efficacy, and frequently leave them as much under the tyranny of pride, passion, sensuality, envy, and malice, as any of the vulgar whom they despise for their ignorance. It is well known, to the disgrace of the morality which the world applauds, that some of their most admired sentimental writers and teachers have deserved to be numbered among the most abandoned and despicable of mankind. They have been slaves to the basest and most degrading appetites, and the tenor of their lives has been a marked contradiction to their fine-spun theories. But Jesus Christ effectually teaches his disciples to forsake and abhor whatever is contrary to rectitude or purity; and inspires them with love, power, and a sound mind. And if they do not talk of great things, they are enabled to perform them. Their lives are exemplary and useful, their deaths comfortable, and their memory is precious.

4. The disciples of Jesus are, or may be, always learning. His providence and wisdom have so disposed things, in subserviency to the purposes of his grace, that the whole world around them is as a great school, and the events of every day, with which they are connected, have a tendency and suitableness, if rightly improved, to promote their instruction. Heavenly lessons are taught and illustrated by earthly objects; nor are we capable of understanding them at present, unless the mode of instruction be thus accommodated to our situation and weakness. The scripture (John iii. 12,) points out to us a wonderful and beautiful analogy between the outward visible world of nature, and that spiritual state which is called the kingdom of God; the former is like a book written in cypher, to which the scripture is the key, which, when we obtain, we have the ether opened to us. Thus, wherever they look, some object presents itself, which is adapted, either to lead their thoughts directly to Jesus, or to explain or confirm some passage in his word. So likewise, the incidents of human life; the characters we know, the conversation we hear, the vicissitudes which take place in families, cities, and nations; in a word, the occurrences which furnish the history of every day, afford a perpetual commentary on what the scriptures teach concerning the heart of man and the state of the world, as subject to vanity, and lying in wickedness; and thereby the great truths which it behoves us to understand and remember, are more repeatedly and forcibly exhibited before our eyes, and brought home to our bosoms. It is the peculiar advantage of the disciples of Christ, that their lessons are always before them, and their Master always with them.

5. Men who are otherwise competently qualified for teaching in the branches of science they profess, often discourage and intimidate their scholars, by the impatience, austerity, and distance of their manner. They fail in that condescension and gentleness which are necessary to engage the attention and affection of the timid and the volatile, or gradually to soften and to shame the perverse. Even Moses, though eminent for his forbearance towards the obstinate people committed to his care, and though he loved them, and longed for their welfare, was, at times, almost wearied by them, Numb. xi. 11, 12. But Jesus, who knows before-hand the weakness, the dulness, and the refractoriness of those whom he deigns to teach, to prevent their fears is pleased to say, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly." With what meekness did he converse among his disciples, while he was with them upon earth! He allowed them at all times a gracious freedom of access. He bore with their mistakes, reproved and corrected them with

the greatest mildness, and taught them as they were able to bear, with a kind accommodation to their prejudices; leading them on step by step, and waiting for the proper season of unfolding to them those more difficult points, which, for a time, appeared to them to be hard sayings. And though he be now exalted upon his glorious throne and clothed with majesty, still his heart is made of tenderness, and his compassions still abound. We are still directed to think of him, not as one who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but as exercising the same patience and sympathy towards his disciples now, which so signally marked his character during his state of humiliation. The compliment of the orator to a Roman emperor, though excessive and absurd when addressed to a sinful worm, that they who durst speak to him were ignorant of his greatness, and they who durst not were equally ignorant of his goodness, is a just and literal truth, if applied to our meek and gracious Saviour. If we duly consider his greatness alone, it seems almost presumption in such creatures as we are, to dare to take his holy name upon our polluted lips; but then, if we have a proportionable sense of his unbounded goodness and grace, every difficulty is overruled, and we feel a liberty of drawing near to him, though with reverence, yet with the confidence of children when they speak to an affectionate parent.

A person may be meek, though in an elevated situation of life; but Jesus was likewise lowly. There was nothing in his external appearance to intimidate the poor and the miserable from coming to him. He was lowly or humble. Custom, which fixes the force and acceptation of words, will not readily allow us to speak of humility as applicable to the great God. Yet it is said, He humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in earth, Psal. cxiii. 6. Humility, in strictness of speech, is an attribute of magnanimity; an indifference to the little distinctions by which weak and vulgar minds are affected. In the view of the high and holy One who inhabiteth eternity (Is. lvii. 15,) all distinctions that can obtain among creatures vanish; and he humbles himself no less to notice the worship of an angel, than the fall of a sparrow to the ground. But we more usually express this idea by the term condescension. Such was the mind that was in Christ, Phil. ii. 5. It belonged to his dignity, as Lord of all, to look with an equal eye upon all his creatures. None could recommend themselves to him by their rank, wealth, or abilities, the gifts of his own bounty; none were excluded from his regard, by the want of those things which are in estimation among men. And to stain the pride of human glory, he was pleased to assume an humble state. Though he was rich, he made himself poor (2 Cor. viii. 9,) for the sake of those whom he came into the world to save. In this respect he teaches us by his example. He took upon him the form of a servant (Phil. ii. 7,) a poor and obscure man, to abase our pride, to cure us of selfishness, and to reconcile us to the cross.

The happy effect of his instructions upon those who receive them, is, rest to their souls. This has been spoken to before; but as it is repeated in the text, I shall not entirely pass it over here. He gives rest to our souls,—by restoring us to our proper state of dependence upon God; as a state of reconciliation and peace, and deliverance from guilt and fear; a state of subjection; for till our wills are duly subjected to the will of God, we can have no rest—by showing us the vanity of the world, and thereby putting an end to our wearisome desires and pursuits after things uncertain, frequently unattainable, always unsatisfying—by a communication of sublimer pleasures and hopes than the present state of things can possibly afford—and lastly, by furnishing us with those aids, motives, and encouragements, which make our duty desirable, practicable, and pleasant.

How truly then may it be said, that his yoke is easy, and his burden light! such a burden as wings are to a bird, raising the soul above the low and grovelling attachments to which it was once confined. They only can rightly judge of the value of this rest, who are capable of contrasting it with the distractions and miseries, the remorse and forebodings, of those who live without God in the world.

But we are all, by profession, his scholars. Ought we not seriously to inquire, what we have actually learned from him? Surely the proud, the haughty, the voluptuous, and the worldly, though they have heard of his name, and may have attended on his institutions, have not hitherto sat at his feet, or drank of his Spirit. It requires no long train of examination to determine, whether you have entered into his rest, or not; or, if you have not yet attained it, whether you are seeking it in the ways of his appointment. It is a rest for the soul, it is a spiritual blessing, and therefore does not necessarily depend upon external circumstances. Without this rest, you must be restless and comfortless in a palace. If you have it, you may be, at least comparatively, happy in a dungeon. To-day, if not before to-day, while it is called to-day, hear his voice; and while he says to you by his word, "Come unto me, and learn of me," let your hearts answer, "Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God," Jer. iii. 22.

SERMON XVI.

THE LAMB OF GOD, THE GREAT ATONEMENT.

Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!—John i. 29.

GREAT and marvellous are the works of the Lord God Almighty! We live in the midst of them, and the little impression they make upon us sufficiently proves our depravity. He is great in the very smallest; and there is not a plant, flower, or insect, but bears the signature of infinite wisdom and power. How sensibly then should we be affected by the consideration of the whole, if sin had not blinded our understandings, and hardened our hearts! In the beginning, when all was dark, unformed, and waste, his powerful word produced light, life, beauty, and order. He commanded the sun to shine, and the planets to roll. The immensity of creation is far beyond the reach of our conceptions. The innumerable stars, the worlds, which, however large in themselves, are, from their remoteness, but barely visible, to us are of little more immediate and known use, than to enlarge our idea of the greatness of their Author. Small, indeed, is the knowledge we have of our own system; but we know enough to render our indifference inexcusable. The glory of the sun must strike every eye; and in this enlightened age, there are few persons but have some ideas of the magnitude of the planets, and the rapidity and regularity of their motions. Farther, the rich variety which adorns this lower creation, the dependence and relation of the several parts and their general subserviency to the accommodation of man, the principal inhabitant, together with the preservation of individuals, and the continuance of every species of animals, are subjects not above the reach of common capacities, and which afford almost endless and infinite scope for reflection and admiration. But the bulk of mankind regard them not. The vicissitudes of day and night, and of the revolving seasons, are to them matters of course, as if they followed each other without either cause or design. And though the philosophers, who professedly attach themselves to the study of the works of nature, are overwhelmed by the traces of a wisdom and arrangement which they are unable to comprehend; yet few of them are led to reverential thoughts of God, by their boasted knowledge of his creatures. Thus men live without God in the world, though they live, and move, and have their being in him, and are incessantly surrounded by the most striking proofs of his presence and energy. Perhaps an earthquake, or a hurricane, by awakening their fears, may force upon their minds a conviction of his power over them and excite an occasional momentary application to him; but when they think the danger over, they relapse into their former stupidity.

What can engage the attention, or soften the obduracy of such creatures? Behold one wonder more, greater than all the former; the last, the highest effect of divine goodness! God has so loved rebellious, ungrateful sinners, as to appoint them a Saviour in the person of his only Son. The prophets foresaw his manifestation in the flesh, and foretold the happy consequences—that his presence would change the wilderness into a fruitful field, that he was coming to give sight to the blind, and life to the dead; to set the captive at liberty; to unloose the heavy burden; and to bless the weary with rest. But this change was not to be wrought merely by a word of power, as when he said, "Let there be light, and there was light," Gen. i. 3. It was great, to speak the world from nothing; but far greater, to redeem sinners from misery. The salvation, of which he is the Author, though free to us, must cost him dear. Before the mercy of God can be actually dispensed to such offenders, the rights of his justice, the demands of his law, and the honour of his government must be provided for. The early institution and long continued use of sacrifices, had clearly pointed out the necessity of an atonement; but the real and proper atonement could only be made by Messiah. The blood of slaughtered animals could not take away sin, nor display the righteousness of God in pardoning it. This was the appointed covenanted work of Messiah, and he alone could perform it. With this view he had said, "Lo, I come," Psal. xl. 7. And it was in this view, when John saw him, that he pointed him out to his disciples, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

Three points offer to our consideration:

I. The title here given to Messiah,—The Lamb of God.

II. The efficacy of his sacrifice,—He taketh away sin.

III. The extent of it,—The sin of the world.

1. He is the Lamb of God.—The paschal lamb, and the lambs which were daily offered, morning and evening, according to the law of Moses, were of God's appointment; but this Lamb was likewise of his providing. The others were but types. Though many, they were all insufficient (Heb. x. 10) to cleanse the consciences of the offerers from guilt; and they were all superseded, when Messiah, by the one offering of himself, once for all, made an end of sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness, in favour of all who believe in his name.

This title, therefore, the Lamb of God, refers to his voluntary substitution for sinners, that by his sufferings and death they who deserved to die might obtain eternal life

through him, and for his sake. Mankind were universally chargeable with transgression of the law of God, and were in a state of alienation from him. A penalty in case of disobedience, was annexed to the law they had broken; to which they, as offenders, were therefore obnoxious. Though it would be presumptuous in such worms as we are, to determine, upon principles of our own, whether the sovereign Judge of the universe could, consistently with his own glory, remit this penalty without satisfaction, or not, yet, since he has favoured us with a revelation of his will upon the point, we may speak more confidently, and affirm, that it was not consistent with his truth and holiness, and the honour of his moral government, to do it; because this is his own declaration. We may now be assured, that the forgiveness of one sinner, and, indeed, of one sin, by an act of mere mercy, and without any interposing consideration, was incompatible with the inflexibility of the law, and the truth and justice of the Lawgiver. But mercy designed the forgiveness of innumerable sinners, each of them chargeable with innumerable sins; and the declaration, that God is thus merciful, was to be recorded, and publicly known through a long succession of ages, and to extend to sins not yet committed. An act of grace so general and unreserved, might lead men (not to speak of superior intelligences) to disparaging thoughts of the holiness of God, and might even encourage them to sin with hope of impunity, if not connected with some provision, which might show that the exercise of his mercy was in full harmony with the honour of all his perfections. How God could be just, and yet justify those (Rom. iii. 26) whom his own righteous constitution condemned, was a difficulty too great for finite understandings to solve. But herein is God glorious. His wisdom propounded, and his love afforded, the adequate, the only possible expedient. He revealed to our first parents his purpose, which in the fulness of time he accomplished, of sending forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem sinners from the curse of the law, (Gal. iv. 4,) by sustaining it for them. Considering the dignity of his person and the perfection of his obedience, his sufferings and death for sins not his own, displayed the heinousness of sin, and the severe displeasure of God against it, in a much stronger light than the execution of the sentence upon the offenders could possibly do. It displays likewise the justice of this sentence, since neither the dignity nor the holiness of the surety could exempt him from suffering; and that, though he was the beloved of God, he was not spared. This is what I understand by atonement and satisfaction for sin.

II. The efficacy of this atonement is complete. The Lamb of God, thus slain, taketh away sin, both with respect to its guilt and its defilement. The Israelites, by looking to the brazen serpent, (Numb. xxi. 9,) were saved from death, and healed of their wounds. The Lamb of God is an object, proposed, not to our bodily sight, but to the eye of the mind, which indeed in fallen man is naturally blind; but the gospel-message, enlivened by the powerful agency of the Holy Spirit, is appointed to open it. He who thus seeth the Son, and believeth on him, (John vi. 40.) is delivered from guilt and condemnation, is justified from all sin. He is warranted to plead the sufferings of the Lamb of God in bar of his own; the whole of the Saviour's obedience unto death, as the ground and title of his acceptance unto life. Guilt or obnoxiousness to punishment being removed, the soul has an open way of access to God, and is prepared to receive blessings from him. For as the sun, the fountain of light, fills the eye that was before blind, the instant it receives sight; so God, who is the fountain of goodness, enlightens all his intelligent creatures according to their capacity, unless they are by sin blinded, and rendered incapable of communion with him. The Saviour is now received and enthroned in the heart, and from his fulness the life of grace is derived and maintained. Thus not only the guilt, but the love of sin, and its dominion, are taken away, subdued by grace, and cordially renounced by the believing pardoned sinner. The blood which frees him from distress, preserves a remembrance of the great danger and misery from which he has been delivered warm upon his heart, inspires him with gratitude to his Deliverer, and furnishes him with an abiding and constraining motive for cheerful and universal obedience.

III. The designed extent of this gratuitous removal of sin, by the oblation of the Lamb of God, is expressed in a large and indefinite manner: He taketh away the sin of the world. Many of my hearers need not to be told, what fierce and voluminous disputes have been maintained concerning the extent of the death of Christ. I am afraid the advantages of such controversies have not been answerable to the zeal of the disputants. For myself, I wish to be known by no name but that of a christian, and implicitly to adopt no system but the Bible. I usually endeavour to preach to the heart and the conscience, and to wave, as much as I can, all controversial points. But as the subject now lies directly before me, I shall embrace the occasion, and simply and honestly open to you the sentiments of my heart concerning it.

If because the death of Christ is here said to take away the sin of the world, or, (as this evangelist expresses it in another place.) the whole world, (1 John ii. 2,) it be inferred, that he actually designed and intended the salvation of all men, such an inference would

be contradicted by fact. For it is certain that all men will not be saved, Matt. vii. 13, 14. It is to be feared, that the greater part of those to whom the word of his salvation is sent perish in their sins. If therefore he cannot be disappointed of his purpose, since many do perish, it could not be his fixed design that all men should be finally and absolutely saved.

The exceeding great number, once dead in trespasses and sins, who shall be found on his right hand at the great day of his appearance, are frequently spoken of in appropriate and peculiar language. They are styled his sheep, (John x. 11, 16,) for whom he laid down his life; his elect, (Mark xiii. 27,) his own; (John xiii. 1;) those to whom it is given to believe in his name, (Phil. i. 29,) and concerning whom it was the Father's good pleasure to predestinate them to the adoption of children, Eph. v. 5. By nature they are children of wrath, even as others, (Eph. ii. 3,) and no more disposed in themselves to receive the truth than those who obstinately and finally reject it. Whenever they become willing, they are made so in a day of divine power, (Psal. cx. 3,) and wherein they differ, it is grace that makes them to differ, 1 Cor. iv. 7. Passages in the scripture to this purpose are innumerable; and though much ingenuity has been employed to soften them, and to make them speak the language of an hypothesis, they are so plain in themselves that he who runs may read. It is not the language of conjecture, but of inspiration, that they whom the Lord God did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, Rom. viii. 29. And though some serious persons perplex themselves with needless and painful reasonings, with respect to the sovereignty of God in his conduct towards mankind, they all, if truly spiritual and enlightened, stand upon this very ground, in their own experience. Many, who seem to differ from us in the way of argumentation, perfectly accord with us, when they simply speak of what God has done for their souls. They know and acknowledge as readily as we, that they were first found of him when they sought him not; and that otherwise they neither should nor could have sought him at all; nor can they give any better reason than this why they are saved out of the world, That it pleased the Lord to make them his people, 1 Sam. xii. 22.

But, on the other hand, I cannot think the sense of the expression is sufficiently explained, by saying, That the world, and the whole world is spoken of, to teach us that the sacrifice of the Lamb of God was not confined, like to Levitical offerings, to the nation of Israel only; but that it is available for the sins of a determined number of persons, called the Elect, who are scattered among many nations, and found under a great variety of states and circumstances in human life. This is undoubtedly the truth, so far as it goes; but not, I apprehend, fully agreeable to the scriptural manner of representation. That there is an election of grace, we are plainly taught; yet it is not said, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save the elect, but that he came to save sinners, to seek and to save them that are lost, 1 Tim. i. 15; Luke xix. 10. Upon this ground I conceive that ministers have a warrant to preach the gospel to every human creature, and to address the conscience of every man in the sight of God; and that every person who hears this gospel has thereby a warrant, an encouragement, yea, a command, to apply to Jesus Christ for salvation. And that they who refuse, thereby exclude themselves, and perish, not because they never had, nor possibly could have any interest in his atonement, but simply because they will not come unto him that they may have life. I know something of the cavils and curious reasonings which obtain upon this subject, and I know I may be pressed with difficulties, which I cannot resolve to the full satisfaction of inquiring and speculative spirits. I am not disheartened by meeting with some things beyond the grasp of my scanty powers, in a book which I believe to be inspired by him whose ways and thoughts are higher than ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth, Isa. lv. 8, 9. But I believe, that vain reasonings, self-will, an attachment to names and parties, and a disposition to draw our sentiments from human systems, rather than to form them by a close and humble study of the Bible, with prayer for divine teaching, are the chief sources of our perplexities and disputes.

The extent of the atonement is frequently represented, as if a calculation had been made how much suffering was necessary for the surety to endure, in order exactly to expiate the aggregate number of all the sins of all the elect; that so much he suffered precisely, and no more; and that when this requisition was completely answered, he said, It is finished, bowed his head, and gave up the ghost, John xix. 30. But this nicety of computation does not seem analogous to that unbounded magnificence and grandeur which overwhelm the attentive mind in the contemplation of the divine conduct in the natural world. When God waters the earth, he waters it abundantly, Psal. lxv. 10. He does not restrain the rain to cultivated or improvable spots, but with a profusion of bounty worthy of himself, his clouds pour down water with equal abundance upon the barren mountain, the lonely desert, and the pathless ocean. Why may we not say with the scriptures, that Christ died to declare the righteousness of God, (Rom. iii. 25, 26,) to manifest that he is just in justifying the ungodly who believe in Jesus? And for any thing we know to

the contrary, the very same display of the evil and demerit of sin, by the Redeemer's agonies and death, might have been equally necessary, though the number of the elect were much smaller than it will appear to be when they shall all meet before the throne of glory. If God had formed this earth for the residence of one man only; had it been his pleasure to afford him the same kind and degree of light which we enjoy, the same glorious sun, which is now sufficient to enlighten and comfort the millions of mankind, would have been necessary for the accommodation of that one person. So, perhaps, had it been his pleasure to save but one sinner, in a way that should give the highest possible discovery of his justice and of his mercy, this could have been done by no other method than that which he has chosen for the salvation of the innumerable multitudes who will in the great day unite in the song of praise to the Lamb who loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood. As the sun has a sufficiency of light for eyes (if there were so many capable of beholding it) equal in number to the leaves upon the trees, and the blades of grass that grow upon the earth; so in Jesus, the Sun of righteousness, there is plenteous redemption; he is rich in mercy to all that call upon him; (Psal. cxxx. 7; Rom. x. 12;) and he invites sinners, without exception, to whom the word of his salvation is sent, even to the ends of the earth, to look unto him, that they may be saved, Isa. xiv. 22.

Under the gospel-dispensation, and by it, God commands all men, every where, to repent, Acts xvii. 30. All men, therefore, every where, are encouraged to hope for forgiveness, according to the constitution prescribed by the gospel; otherwise repentance would be both impracticable and unavailing. And therefore the command to repent, implies a warrant to believe in the name of Jesus as taking away the sin of the world. Let it not be said, that to call upon men to believe, which is an act beyond their natural power, is to mock them. There is prescribed means for the obtaining of faith, which it is not beyond their natural power to comply with, if they are not wilfully obstinate. We have the word of God for our authority. God cannot be mocked, (Gal. vi. 7,) neither doth he mock his creatures. Our Lord did not mock the young ruler, when he told him that if he would sell his possessions upon earth, and follow him, he should have treasure in heaven, Luke xviii. 22. Had this ruler no power to sell his possessions? I doubt not but that he himself thought he had power to sell them if he pleased. But while he loved his money better than he loved Christ, and preferred earthly treasures to heavenly, he had no will to part with them. And a want of will in a moral agent, is a want of power in the strongest sense. Let none presume to offer such excuses to their Maker as they would not accept in their own concerns. If you say of a man, he is such a liar that he cannot speak a word of truth; so profane that he cannot speak without an oath; so dishonest that he cannot omit one opportunity of cheating or stealing; do you speak of this disability to good, as an extenuation, and because you think it renders him free from blame! Surely you think, the more he is disinclined to do good, and habituated to evil, the worse he is. A man that can speak lies and perjury, that can deceive and rob, but is such an enemy to truth and goodness that he can do nothing that is kind or upright, must be a shocking character indeed! Judge not more favourably of yourself if you can love the world and sensual pleasure, but cannot love God; if you can fear a worm like yourself, but live without the fear of God; if you can boldly trample upon his laws, but will not, and therefore cannot humble yourself before him, and seek his mercy, in the way of his appointment.

We cannot ascribe too much to the grace of God; but we should be careful, that under a semblance of exalting his grace, we do not furnish the slothful and unfaithful (Matt. xxv. 16) with excuses for their wilfulness and wickedness. God is gracious; but let man be justly responsible for his own evil, and not presume to state his case so, as would, by just consequence, represent the holy God as being the cause of the sin, which he hates and forbids.

The whole may be summed up in two points, which I commend to your serious attention; which it must be the business of my life to enforce; and which, I trust, I shall not repent of having enforced, either at the hour of death, or in the day of judgment, when I must give an account of my preaching, and you of what you have heard in this place.

1. That salvation is, indeed, wholly of grace. The gift of a Saviour, the first dawn of light into the heart, all the supports and supplies needful for carrying on the work from the foundation to the top-stone, all is of free grace.

2. That now the Lamb of God is preached to you as taking away the sin of the world, if you reject him, (which may the Lord forbid!) I say, if you reject him, your blood will be upon your own head. You are warned, you are invited. Dare not to say, Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will! Rom. ix. 19. If he will save me, I shall be saved: if not, what can I do? God is merciful, but he is also holy and just; he is almighty, but his infinite power is combined with wisdom, and is regulated by the great designs of his government. He can do innumerable things which he will not do. What he will do (so far as we are concerned)

his word informs us, and not one jot or tittle thereof shall fail, Matt. v. 18.

SERMON XVII.

MESSIAH DESPISED AND REJECTED OF MEN.

He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. —Isaiah liii. 3.

THE heathen moralists, ignorant of the character and perfections of God, the true dignity and immortality of the soul, and the root and extent of human depravity, had no better foundation for what they called virtue, than pride; no higher aim in their regulations, than the interests of society and the conduct of civil life. They expressed, indeed, occasionally, some sentiments of a superior kind; but these, however just and valuable upon the principles of revelation, were delusive and impracticable upon their own. And Brutus, one of the most admired characters of antiquity, confessed, just before he put an end to his own life, that having long been enamoured of virtue as a real good, he found it, at last, to be but an empty name. But though they had so little satisfaction, or success, in the pursuit of virtue, they were so pleased with the idea they formed of it, as generally to suppose, that if virtue should become visible, it would necessarily engage the esteem and admiration of mankind.

There was, however, one remarkable exception to this opinion. The wisdom of Socrates seems to have been, in many respects, different from that of the bulk of their philosophers. Socrates having expressed his idea of a perfect character, a truly virtuous man, ventured to predict the reception such a person, if such a one could ever be found, would meet with from the world. And he thought, that his practice would be so dissimilar to that of other men, his testimony against their wickedness so strong, and his endeavours to reform them so importunate and unwelcome, that instead of being universally admired, he would be disliked and hated; that mankind were too degenerate and too obstinate, to bear either the example or the reproof of such a person, and would most probably revile and persecute him, and put him to death as an enemy to their peace.

In this instance, the judgment of Socrates accords with the language of the Old, and with the history of the New Testament. Messiah was this perfect character. As such Isaiah describes him. He likewise foresaw how he would be treated, and foretold that he would be numbered with transgressors, despised and rejected, by the very people who were eye-witnesses of his upright and benevolent conduct. And thus, in fact, it proved. When Jesus was upon earth, true virtue and goodness were visibly displayed, and thereby the wickedness of man became signally conspicuous. For they among whom he was conversant, preferred a robber and a murderer to him, John xviii. 40. They preserved Barabbas, who had been justly doomed to die for enormous crimes, and they nailed Jesus, in his stead, to the cross.

When Messiah appeared, the Jews professed to blame the wickedness of their forefathers, who had opposed and slain the prophets. If they regretted the ill-treatment the servants of God had formerly received, might it not be hoped that they would reverence his son! (Matt. xxi. 47,) concerning whom, under his character of Messiah, their expectations were raised by the scriptures, which were read in their synagogues every sabbath-day.

But he was despised and rejected of men. Angels sung praises at his birth, but men despised him. He took not upon him the nature of angels, but of man; yet men rejected him. Sinful, helpless men rejected and despised the only Saviour. He came to his own, but his own received him not. How lamentable and fatal was their obstinacy! Pretended Messiahs were eagerly regarded and followed by them, (John v. 43,) but the true Messiah was despised and rejected of men!

Let us consider the clauses of the text separately, in the order in which we read them.

I. He was despised and rejected of men.—It would be a great mistake to imagine that the Jews were the only people capable of this ingratitude and obstinacy. If any person here thinks, surely I would not have despised him, had I seen his wonderful works, and heard him speak as never man spake: possibly that thought may prove you to be of the very same spirit with those who, while they thirsted for his blood, ignorantly presumed, that if they had lived in the days of their forefathers, they would not have joined with them in persecuting the prophets, Matt. xxiii. 31. The prejudices which operated so strongly against our Lord's mission and ministry, were not peculiar to the people of one age or country, but such as are deeply rooted in the nature of fallen man. The same principles which influenced the Jews to oppose and despise his person, still influence multitudes to slight and oppose the doctrine which he taught, and which he commanded his disciples to preach and perpetuate to the end of the world. In proof of this, it will be sufficient to assign some of the principal causes of the contempt and hatred which he met with from the men of that generation.

1. They despised him for what they accounted the meanness of his appearance.

Though rich in himself, he became poor for our sakes, and his poverty made him contemptible in their eyes. They expected Messiah would appear with external pomp and power. But when they saw him, they scorned him, saying, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" Matt. xiii. 55. He who had not money to pay the tribute demanded of him (Matt. xvii. 27,) nor a house wherein to lay his head, was of small esteem with those who were covetous, proud of worldly distinctions, and fond of the praise and admiration of men.

2. Their contempt was heightened, when this poor man publicly asserted his proper character and claim, demanded their attention and homage, and styled himself in a peculiar sense the Son of God, the resurrection and the life, John v. 18; xi. 25. For this seeming inconsistence between the appearance he made and the honours he assumed, they treated him as a demoniac and a madman, John x. 20. Their language strongly expressed their sentiments of him, when they asked him with disdain, "Art thou greater than our father Abraham? Whom makest thou thyself?" John viii. 53.

3. They objected to him the low state and former characters of his followers. Some of them were of low rank in life. The most of those who constantly attended him were poor fishermen. Others had been of bad repute, publicans, and open sinners. For this they reproached him, and thought they were fully justified in their contempt, while they could say, "Have any of the rulers or Pharisees believed on him?" John vii. 48.

4. They were further exasperated against him, by the authority and severity with which he taught. It is true, he was gentle and meek to all who felt their need of his help, or sincerely desired his instruction. He received them without exception, and treated them with the greatest tenderness. But he vindicated the honour of the law of God, from the corrupt doctrine and tradition of their professed teachers. He exposed and unmasked the hypocrisy of their most admired characters, and compared the men who were in the highest reputation for wisdom and sanctity, to whited sepulchres, warning the people against them as blind guides and deceivers.

5. These blind guides strengthened the prejudices of their blind followers against him, by misrepresentation. They attempted to avail themselves of the scripture, when they thought it would answer their purpose. They eagerly made the most of a prevailing mistake, that Jesus was born in Galilee, because he was brought up in Nazareth from his infancy. This they urged as a proof that he could not be Messiah, who the prophets had declared was to be born at Bethlehem in Judea. When he healed diseases on the sabbath-day, they represented the effects of his compassion as a breach of that strict observance of the Sabbath which was enjoined by the law of Moses, and that therefore he could not be of God, John ix. 16. And when they were not able to deny the reality of his wonderful works, they ascribed them to the agency of Satan, Matt. xii. 24. We at this distance of time, can easily perceive the folly and madness of their attempts. But the Scribes and Pharisees were the public authorized doctors and teachers of the people, and were supported by the ecclesiastical and civil power; or, as we should now express it, by church and state. The people were not apt to suspect their leaders, whom they thought wiser and better than themselves; or, if sometimes they hesitated, were impressed by the majesty of his words, or the evidence of his miraculous works, and constrained to say, "Is not this the son of David?" (Matt. xii. 23.) They were soon intimidated and silenced by canons and laws; for it was carefully enacted, in order to keep them in subjection, that whoever acknowledged him should be put out of the synagogues; (John ix. 22; xii. 48;) that is, according to our modern language, excommunicated. This among the Jews, as it has often since been among Christians, was a punishment which drew after it terrible consequences. A man must be in good earnest, or rather taught and supported by the grace of God, who could resist such arguments as these.

These things are easily applicable to the church-history of succeeding times. The gospel of Christ has often been, and is to this day, rejected and despised upon similar grounds. Its simplicity and plainness, and the manner of its proposal, adapted to the use and capacity of the vulgar, offend those who are wise in their own conceit, and proud of their understanding and taste. At the same time they are equally disgusted by the sublimity of its doctrines, which will not submit to the test of their vain reasonings, and can only be received by humble faith. The faithfulness and freedom which its ministers are enjoined to use, give great offence likewise. And because they cannot comply with the humours of those who wish them to prophesy smooth things and deceits, they are accounted censorious, uncharitable, and disturbers of the public peace. Again, the dislike and opposition it frequently meets with from persons of great titles and high stations, deter multitudes from pursuing those inquiries, which some conviction of the truth would prompt them to, were they not discouraged by the fear of consequences. How often has a dread of the displeasure of doctors, bishops, universities, councils, and popes, or an ignorant, slavish deference to their judgment or decisions, prevented people from following that light which had begun to force itself

upon their consciences? How few among those of reputation for wisdom and learning, how few of the great and opulent, have encouraged or espoused the doctrine of the cross! It is, therefore, more properly a subject for lamentation than for wonder, that this way is despised, and almost everywhere spoken against, Acts xxviii. 22. Farther, as the bulk of those who embrace it are of low condition, so many of them are as free to confess to the praise of the grace of God, as others can be to urge it to their reproach, that till they knew and received this despised gospel, their characters and practices were vile. Lastly, what unhappy subtilty has been employed, in a way of reason and argument, with an appeal to detached and perverted passages of scripture, to misrepresent the work of the Holy Spirit, as folly, hypocrisy, or enthusiasm, and even to charge the gospel itself with giving encouragement to a licentious conduct! In short, the spirit of the world, the arts and influence of designing men, are so powerful, that what our Lord said in Judea, holds equally true in christendom, "Blessed is he who is not offended in me!" Matt. xi. 6.

I have reserved to a distinct paragraph the mention of one cause why the gospel is frequently despised and reproached. Because, though it be no less unjust and unreasonable than those which I have recited, it is more immediately incumbent upon all who name the name of Christ, to prevent it as much as possible; I mean, the scandal which arises from the miscarriages of those who profess it. Offences of this kind must come, but woe to them by whom they come, Matt. xviii. 7. There were pretended Christians, even in the apostles times, who were enemies to the cross of Christ, (Phil. iii. 18,) and by their evil conduct caused the ways of truth to be evil spoken of; and therefore we cannot be surprised that there are such persons now. But you that love the Lord, hate evil, Psal. xcii. 10. There are many who watch for your halting, and are ready to say, There! there! so we would have it. It would be in vain for ministers to declare that the doctrines of grace are doctrines according to godliness, unless our testimony is supported by the tempers and conduct of our people: the world will probably judge, rather by what they see in you, than by what they hear from us. Nor will it suffice that they cannot say you are an adulterer, a drunkard, a miser, or a cheat. If you espouse our doctrine, they will expect you to be humble, meek, patient and benevolent; to find integrity in all your dealings, and a punctual discharge of your duty in every branch of a relative life. What must the world think of our principles, if they who avow them are fretful, envious, censorious, discontented, slothful, or unfaithful; or if they are niggardly and hard-hearted, or voluptuous and dissolute, or implacable and revengeful! they who thus lay stumbling-blocks before the blind, and confirm the prejudices of the ignorant, will have much to answer for.

II. It is further said, he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.—He was surrounded with sorrows on every side, and grief was his intimate, inseparable companion. Surely this consideration, if any, will animate us to endure the cross, and to despise the shame, we may be exposed to for his sake. The illustration of this subject will offer more fully in the sequel. It shall suffice, at present, to assign three causes for his continual sorrows.

1. The outward course of life to which he submitted, for the sake of sinners, exposed him to want, weariness, contempt, and opposition. And though his resignation and patience were perfect, yet he was truly a man, and partaker of our nature, with all its affections and sensibilities which do not imply sin. His feelings therefore, were human, similar to our own in similar circumstances; and they were often painfully exercised. Once and again we read that he was hungry and had no food; he was thirsty, (Matt. iv. 9; xxi. 18; John iv. 2,) and was nearly refused a little water to drink, when wearied with his journeying in the heat of the day. His character was aspersed, his person despised, his words insidiously wrested, and his actions misrepresented. He was misunderstood even by his friends, betrayed by one disciple, denied by another, and forsaken by the rest, John vii. 5. It is hardly possible for his followers to meet with any outward trial, which may not remind them of some part of the history of their Lord and master, who left them an example of suffering, that they should cheerfully follow his steps, 1 Pet. ii. 21.

2. His perfect knowledge and foresight of those sufferings which we emphatically call his Passion. How often does he speak of them, and describe the circumstances as if they were actually present! Futurity is, in mercy, concealed from us. It would often bereave us of all present comfort, if we knew what the next year, or perhaps, what the next day would bring forth. If some of you could have foreseen, many years ago, what you have since been brought through, you would probably have sunk under the apprehension; or the stoutest of us might sink now, if we were certainly to know what may be yet before us. But Jesus, long before he made atonement for our sins, had counted the cost. And though his love determined him to save us, the prospect, which was continually present to his view, of the approaching unutterable agonies of his soul, of all that he must endure from God, from the powers of darkness, and from wicked men, when he should be made a curse for us, to redeem us from the curse of the law, (Gal. iii 13.)

say, this tremendous prospect was, doubtless, a perpetual source of sorrow.

3. The frame of his spirit. Whoever has a measure of the mind that was in Christ, must be proportionally burdened and grieved, like righteous Lot in Sodom, (2 Pet. ii. 8,) with the wickedness around him, if he lives in society. Who that has any regard for the honour of God, or the souls of men, can hear and see what passes every hour; how the authority of God is affronted, his goodness abused, and his mercy despised, without emotions of grief and compassion? If we are spiritually-minded, we must be thus affected; and we should be more so, if we were more spiritual. But the holiness of Messiah, and, consequently, his hatred of sin, was absolutely perfect. His view of the guilt and misery of sinners, was likewise comprehensive and clear. How must he be therefore grieved by the wickedness and insensibility of those with whom he daily conversed! especially as he not only observed the outward conduct of men, but had an intimate knowledge of the evil heart, which is hidden from us. In this sense his sufferings and sorrows began with early years, and continued throughout the whole of his life. He undoubtedly could say, with an emphasis peculiar to himself, "I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; rivers of waters run down my eyes, because men keep not thy law." Psal. cxix.156, 158.

We call ourselves the followers and servants of him, who was despised of men, and encompassed with sorrows. And shall we then seek great things for ourselves (Jer. xlv. 5,) as if we belonged to the present world, and expected no portion beyond it? Or shall we be tremblingly alive to the opinion of our fellow-creatures, and think it a great hardship, if it be our lot to suffer shame for his sake, who endured the cross, and despised the shame for us? Rather may we account such disgrace our glory, and every loss and suffering that we may endure for him, a gain; while on the other hand we learn, with the apostle Paul, to esteem every gain and honour this world can afford, to be but loss and dung in comparison of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, Phil. iii. 8.

SERMON XVIII.

VOLUNTARY SUFFERING.

I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting. Isaiah l. 6.

THAT which often passes amongst men for resolution, and the proof of a noble, courageous spirit, is, in reality, the effect and mark of a weak and little mind. At least, it is chiefly owing to the presence of certain circumstances, which have a greater influence upon the conduct than any inherent principle. Thus many persons who appear to set death and danger at defiance in the hour of battle, while they are animated by the examples of those around them, and instigated by a fear of the punishment or shame they would incur if they deserted their post; upon a change of situation, as, for instance, on a bed of sickness, discover no traces of the heroism for which they were before applauded, but tremble at the leisurely approach of death, though they were thought to despise it under a different form. It was not true fortitude, it was rather a contemptible pusillanimity, that determined the celebrated Cato to destroy himself. He was afraid of Cæsar; his dread of him, after his victories, was so great, that he durst not look him in the face; and therefore he killed himself to avoid him. To the same meanness of sentiment we may confidently ascribe the pretended gallantry of modern duellists. They fight, not because they are not afraid of death, but because they are impelled by another fear, which makes a greater impression upon a feeble irresolute mind. They live upon the opinion of their fellow-creatures, and feel themselves too weak to bear the contempt they should meet with from the circle of their acquaintance, if they should decline acting upon the false principles of honour which pride and folly have established. They have not resolution sufficient to act the part which conscience and reason would dictate, and therefore hazard life, and every thing that is dear to them as men, rather than dare to withstand the prevalence of an absurd and brutal custom.

A patient enduring of affliction, and especially of disgrace and contempt, to which the characters the world most admire are confessedly unequal, is a much surer proof of true fortitude, than any of those actions which the love of praise, the fear of man, or even a mercenary attachment to lucre, are capable of producing. True magnanimity is evidenced by the real importance of the end it proposes, and by the steadiness with which it pursues the proper means of obtaining that end; undisturbed and unwearied by difficulty, danger, or pain, and equally indifferent to the censure or scorn of incompetent judges. This greatness of mind is essential and peculiar to the character of the christian, I mean the christian who deserves the name. His ends are great and sublime; to glorify God, to obtain nearer communion with him, and to advance in conformity to his holy will. To attain these ends, he employs the means proscribed by the Lord: he waits at Wisdom's gates, (Prov. viii. 34,) and walks in the paths

of dependence and obedience. He therefore cannot conform to the prevailing maxims and pursuits of the many, and is liable to be hated and scorned for his singularity. But he neither courts the smiles of men, nor shrinks at the thought of their displeasure. He loves his fellow-creatures, and is ready to do them every kind office in his power; but he cannot fear them, because he fears the Lord God.

But this life the christian lives by faith in the Son of God, Gal. ii. 20. Jesus is the source of his wisdom and strength. He likewise is his exemplar. He is crucified to the world by the cross of Christ; and a principal reason of his indifference to the opinion of the world, is the consideration of the manner in which his Lord was treated by it. He is the follower of him who said, "I gave my back to the smiters, and my checks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting."

We may observe, from the words, that the humiliation of Messiah was *voluntary*, and that it was *extreme*.

I. With respect to his engagement, as the Mediator between God and sinners, a great work was given him to do, and he became responsible; and therefore, in this sense, bound, and under obligation. But this compliance was likewise voluntary; for he gave himself up freely to suffer, the just for the unjust. Could he have relinquished our cause, and left us to the deserved consequence of our sins, in the trying hour when his enemies seized upon him, legions of angels, (Matt. xxvi. 53,) had they been wanted, would have appeared for his rescue. But if he was determined to save others, then his own sufferings were unavoidable. Men in the prosecution of their designs, often meet with unexpected difficulties in their way, which, though they encounter with some cheerfulness, in hope of surmounting them, and carrying their point at last, are considered as impediments; but the sufferings of Messiah were essentially necessary to the accomplishment of his great designs, precisely determined, and present to his view beforehand, so that (as I lately observed) there was not a single circumstance that happened to him unawares. He knew that no blood but his own could make atonement for sin, that nothing less than his humiliation could expiate our pride; that if he did not thus suffer, sinners must inevitably perish; and therefore (such was his love!) he cheerfully and voluntarily gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. Two designs of vast importance filled his mind; the completion of them was that joy set before him, for the sake of which he made himself of no reputation, endured the cross, and despised the shame. These were, the glory of God, and the salvation of sinners.

1. The highest end of his mediation was to display the glory of the divine character in the strongest light, to afford to all intelligent creatures (Eph. iii. 10) the brightest manifestation they are capable of receiving, of the manifold wisdom of God, his holiness, justice, truth, and love, the stability and excellence of his moral government, all mutually illustrating each other, as combined and shining forth in his person, and in his mediatorial work. Much of the glory of God may be seen, by an enlightened eye, in creation, much in his providential rule and care over his creatures; but the brightness of his glory, (John i. 18,) the express and full discovery of his perfections, can only be known by Jesus Christ, and the revelation which God has given of himself to the world by him. And, accordingly, we are assured, that the angels, whose knowledge of the natural world is doubtless vastly superior to ours, desire to look into these things; and that the manifold wisdom of God is supereminently made known to principalities and powers, in heaven, by the dispensation of his grace to the church redeemed from the earth.

2. Subordinate to this great design, closely connected with it, and the principal effect for which it will be admired and magnified to eternity, is the complete and everlasting salvation of that multitude of miserable sinners, who, according to the purpose of God, and by the working of his mighty power, shall believe in this Saviour; and who, renouncing every other hope, shall put their trust in him, upon the warrant of the promise and command of God, and yield themselves to be his willing and devoted people. Many are their tribulations in the present life, but they shall be delivered out of them all; they shall overcome, they shall be more than conquerors, by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of his testimony; (Rev. xii. 11;) and then they shall shine, like the sun, in the kingdom of heaven. The consummation of their happiness, is a branch of the joy which was set before him. For their sakes, that they might be happy, that he may be admired in them, and by them, to the glory of God, who is all in all, he voluntarily substituted himself to sufferings and death. He endured the cross, and he despised the shame. He gave his back to the smiters, his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, he hid not his face from shame and spitting.

II. But are we reading a prophecy, or the history of his extreme humiliation? It is a prophecy; how literally and exactly it was fulfilled, we learn from his history by the evangelists. With what cruelty, with what contempt was he treated, first by the servants in the hall of the High Priest, afterwards by

the Roman soldiers! Let us consider him, who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, Heb. xii. 3. These words of the apostle suggest some preliminary observations, to prepare our minds for receiving a due impression from the several particulars here mentioned.

When the apostle would dispose believers by an argument or motive, (which, if we fully understood it, would render all other arguments unnecessary,) to endure sufferings and crosses patiently, he says "Consider him"—he uses a word which is properly a mathematical term, denoting the ratio or proportion between different numbers or figures; *q. d.* "Compare yourselves with him, and his sufferings with your own. Consider who he is, no less than what he endured."

In the apprehensions of men, insults are aggravated in proportion to the disparity between the person who receives, and who offers them. A blow from an equal is an offence, but would be still more deeply resented from an inferior. But if a subject, a servant, a slave, should presume to strike a king, it would justly be deemed an enormous crime. But Jesus, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, whom all the angels of God worship, made himself so entirely of no reputation, that the basest of the people, the servants, the common soldiers, were not afraid to make him the object of their derision, and to express their hatred in the most sarcastic and contemptuous manner. It is said, that he endured the contradiction of sinners. So, perhaps, do we; but we are sinners likewise, and deserve much more than we suffer, if not immediately from the instruments of our grief, yet from the Lord, who has a right to employ what instruments he pleases to afflict us for our sins. This thought quieted the spirit of David, when his own son rose up against his life, and his own servant cursed him to his face, 2 Sam. xvi. 11. But Jesus was holy, harmless, and undefiled, he had done nothing amiss; yet the usage he met with was such as has seldom been offered to the vilest malefactor. Their cruel and scornful contradiction was likewise expressly and directly against himself; whereas his people only suffer from unreasonable and wicked men, for his sake, and for their professed attachment to him. In the most violent persecutions, they who could be prevailed on to renounce his name and his cause usually escaped punishment, and were frequently favoured and rewarded. And this is still the ground of the world's displeasure; fierce and bitter as their opposition may seem, the way to reconciliation is always open; they are not angry with us farther than we avow a dependence upon him, and show ourselves determined to obey him rather than men. If we could forsake him, their resentment would be disarmed, for they mean no more than to intimidate us from his service. I do not think that they who make peace with the world upon these terms, are esteemed by them for their compliance, but they are seldom disturbed any longer. It is plain, therefore, that if we suffer as christians, it is for his sake. He likewise suffered for our sakes; but how wide is the difference between him and us? We, when the trial is sharp, are in danger of flinching from the cause of our best Friend and benefactor, to whom our obligations are so innumerable, and so immense; whereas he gave himself up to endure such things for us, when we were strangers and enemies! He was not only treated with cruelty, but with every mark of the utmost detestation and scorn, which wanton, unfeeling, unrestrained barbarity could suggest.

1. They began to spit upon him in the High Priest's hall. The Roman soldiers likewise did spit upon him, when they had contemptuously arrayed him in a scarlet robe, and bowed the knee before him, in mockery of his title of King. Great as an insult of this kind would be deemed amongst us, it was considered as still greater, according to the customs prevalent in eastern countries. There, to spit, even in the presence of a person, though it were only upon the ground, conveyed the idea of disdain and abhorrence. But the lowest of the people spit in the face of the Son of God. No comparison can fully illustrate this indignity. There is some proportion between the greatest earthly monarch and the most abject slave. They did not spit upon Alexander, or Cæsar, but upon the Lord of glory.

2. They buffeted and beat him on the face, and when he meekly offered his cheek to their blows, they plucked off the hair. The beard was in those times accounted honourable: and when David's servants were shaved by the command of Hanun, (2 Sam. x. 5,) they were ashamed to be seen. But Jesus was not shaven. With savage violence they tore off the hair of his beard; while he, like a sheep before the shearers, was dumb, and quietly yielded himself to their outrages.

3. His back they tore with scourges, as was foretold by the psalmist: "The plowers plowed upon my back, they made long their furrows," Psal. cxxix. 3. The Jewish council condemned him to death for blasphemy, because he said he was the Son of God. Stoning was the punishment prescribed by the law of Moses, in such cases, Lev. xiv. 16. But this death was not sufficiently lingering and tormenting to gratify their malice. To glut their insatiable cruelty, they were therefore willing to own their subjection to the Roman power to be so absolute, that it was not lawful for them to put any one to death, (John xvii. 31,) according to their own judicial law;

and thus wilfully, though unwittingly, they fulfilled the prophecies. They preferred the punishment which the Romans appropriated to slaves who were guilty of flagitious crimes, and therefore insisted that he should be crucified. According to the Roman custom, those who were crucified were previously scourged. Thus, when they had mocked him, and made him their sport, by putting a crown of thorns on his head, and a reed in his hand for a sceptre, in derision of his kingly office, he was stripped and scourged. It was not unfrequent for the sufferers to expire under the severity and torture of scourging. And we may be certain that Jesus experienced no lenity from their merciless hands. The plowers plowed his back. But more and greater tortures were before him. He was engaged to make a full atonement for sin by his sufferings; and as he had power over his own life, he would not dismiss his spirit, till he could say, "It is finished."

And now, to use the words of Pilate, "Behold the man!" John xix. 5. Oh! for a realizing impression of this his extreme humiliation and suffering, that we may be duly affected with a sense of his love to sinners, and of the evil of our sins, which rendered it necessary that the surety should thus suffer! Behold the Lamb of God, mocked, blindfolded, spit upon, and scourged! Let us add to all this the consideration of his praying for his tormentors, (Luke xxiii. 34,) and we have an example of perfect magnanimity.

Shall we then refuse to suffer shame for his sake, and be intimidated by the frowns or contempt of men, from avowing our attachment to him! Ah! Lord, we are, indeed, capable of this baseness and ingratitude. But if thou art pleased to strengthen us with the power of thy Spirit, we will account such disgrace our glory. Then we will not hang down our heads and despond, but will rather rejoice and be exceeding glad, if the world revile us, and persecute us, and speak all manner of evil against us, provided it be falsely, (Matt. v. 11,) and provided it be for thy sake!

Shall we continue in sin, (Rom. vi. 1,) after we know what it cost him to expiate our sins! God forbid! When Mark Antony addressed the citizens of Rome, to animate them to revenge the death of Cæsar, he enlarged upon Cæsar's character, his great actions, his love to the Roman people, and the evidence he had given of it, in the donations and bequests he had appointed them by his will, the particulars of which he specified. When he had thus engaged their admiration and gratitude, and they discovered emotions of regret and sensibility, that Cæsar, the greatest character in Rome, who had fought and triumphed for them, and had remembered them in his will, should be slain, Antony threw aside a cloth, and showed them his dead body covered with wounds and blood. This sight rendered it needless to say more. The whole assembly united as one man, to search out, and to destroy his murderers. The application is obvious.—May our hearts, from this hour, be filled with a determined, invariable resentment against sin, the procuring cause of the humiliation and death of our best Friend and benefactor!

SERMON XIX.

MESSIAH SUFFERING AND WOUNDED FOR US.

Surely he hath borne our grief and carried our sorrows.—He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.—Isaiah liii. 4, 5.

When our Lord was transfigured, Moses and Elijah appeared in glory and conversed with him. Had we been informed of the interview only, we should probably have desired to know the subject of their conversation, as we might reasonably suppose it turned upon very interesting and important topics. The scripture makes little provision for the indulgence of our curiosity, but omits nothing that is necessary for our instruction; and we learn thus much from it, that they discoursed, not upon the trifling things which the world accounts great, such as the rise and fall of empires; but they spake of the sufferings of Jesus, and of the decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem, Luke ix. 31. They spake of his Exodus, (as the Greek word is,) his departure out of this life, the issue and completion of his engagement for sinners; that is, his crucifixion and death. This is the grand theme of heaven and heaven-born souls. We lately considered the cruel insults Messiah submitted to, from the servants in the High Priest's hall, and from the Roman soldiers. The passage I have now read leads our meditations to the foot of the cross. May the Holy Spirit realize the scene to our hearts! The cross of Christ displays the divine perfections with peculiar glory. Here the name of God is revealed, as a just God and a Saviour. Here the believer contemplates in one view, the unspeakable evil of sin, and the unsearchable riches of mercy. This gives him the most affecting sense of the misery which he has deserved, while at the same time he receives the fullest assurance that there is forgiveness with God, and discovers a sure foundation whereon he may build his hope of eternal life, without fear of disappointment. From the moment the apos-

tle Paul was enlightened to understand this mystery of redeeming love, he accounted his former gain but loss; his former supposed wisdom no better than folly; and became determined to know nothing, (1 Cor. ii. 2; Gal. vi. 14,) to depend upon nothing, to glory in nothing, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

A representation of the Redeemer's sufferings, capable of exciting tears and moving the passions, may be made by the powers of oratory; and similar emotions have often been produced by a romance or a tragedy, though the subject is known beforehand to be entirely a fiction. But light in the understanding is necessary to convince and influence the heart. Unless the mind be deeply penetrated with the causes which rendered Messiah's death necessary, the most pathetic description of the fact will leave the will and affections unchanged. I hope many of my auditory can assign these causes. You have felt yourselves personally concerned in an event which took place long before your birth; and if you are asked, Why was Jesus mocked, buffeted, and spit upon? and why were his enemies permitted to nail him to the cross? You can answer, "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows,"—and you can likewise say, "By his stripes we are healed."

The words lead us to consider the *cause* and the *effect*.

1. The cause of the Redeemer's sufferings, implied in the word *our*. He bore the griefs and sorrows which were our desert. Such is the language, the confession, the grateful acknowledgment of all who believe in his name. They who are delivered by grace from the spirit and power of this evil world, and who live by his death, and likewise they who see they must perish unless saved by him, are authorized to consider him as mindful of them, and making provision for them in the day of his trouble. They who were actually healed by looking at the brazen serpent, according to God's appointment, had a sufficient proof in themselves, that it was erected and placed in view of the camp (Num. xxi. 9) on their account. He bore our griefs.—It does not follow that sinners must have been crucified, if the Saviour had not been crucified on their behalf. But as this was a painful and terrible punishment, it may teach us, that without his interposition we were justly liable to extremity of misery in the present life. That we who have offended God should enjoy health, peace, or satisfaction for a single hour; that we do not draw every breath in the most excruciating pain; that we derive any comfort from creatures; that we are not a burden and a terror to ourselves, and mutually to each other; that our state while upon earth, is, in any respect, better than an image of hell,—must wholly be ascribed to him. A sinner, as such, is under the curse of the law; and this curse includes every species of misery that can affect us, either in mind, body, or estate. But he was appointed from the beginning, to sustain and exhaust the curse for us. And therefore the earth, though so long inhabited by wretches in a state of bold rebellion against their Maker, is filled with the fruits and evidences of his long-suffering patience and mercy. Therefore he still affords us rain and fruitful seasons, (Acts xiv. 17,) indulges us with a variety of temporal blessings, and gives us power to take comfort in them. This consideration greatly enhances the value of temporal good things to his people. They receive them as from his hand, as tokens of his love, and pledges of his favour, sanctified to their use by his blood and promise. Cheered by such thoughts as these, his poor people often enjoy their plain fare with a pleasure, of which the expensive and dissipated sensualist has no conception. And how does it add to the relish of all earthly comforts, to think, while we are using them, that

> There's not a gift his hand bestows,
> But cost his heart a groan!

So, likewise, the remembrance of what he bore for them alleviates the pressure of all their sufferings, and affords them a ground whereon they may rejoice, yea glory, in tribulation also, Rom. v. 3.

But his crucifixion, and the whole of his sufferings from wicked men, cannot give us a just idea of what he endured for us. Grievous as they were, considered in themselves, they were light, if compared with the agonies of his soul. These extorted the blood from his body, (Luke xxiii. 44,) before the hand of man touched him. And when he uttered his most dolorous cry upon the cross, it was not for the anguish of his bodily wounds, but his soul felt for a season a separation from the presence and comforts of God. Therefore he said, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Matt. xxvii. 46. It is true his holy nature was not capable of some part of the impenitent sinner's portion. Remorse of conscience, the stings of the never-dying worm, and the horrors and rage of despair, could not touch him, who had no personal sin, and whose love and faith were always perfect. But a sword pierced his soul: and it pleased the Father not only to permit him to be bruised by the cruelty of his enemies, but to bruise him himself, Is. liii. 10.

The ground of all this was laid in his voluntary substitution of himself from before the foundation of the world, to obey and suffer in behalf of his people. This point will offer more directly from the passage we are next to consider. At present let us briefly notice the expressions before us.

1. He was wounded.—This word which signifies *pierced* or *stabbed*, refers to this cru-

cifixion. This punishment being unknown to the Jews, till they were brought under the Roman power, they had, therefore, no express name for, in their language. Yet it is plainly described by the psalmist, who, speaking, by the spirit of prophecy, in the person of Messiah, says, "They pierced my hands and my feet," Psal. xxii. 16. And it was typified under the law of Moses, (Deut. xxi. 23; Gal. iii. 13; 1 Cor. v. 7; John iii. 14,) by the curse annexed to hanging upon a tree, which was the nearest death to this; by the paschal lamb, which was roasted; and by the brazen serpent. It was a fit death for a sinner, painful and ignominious. How circumstantial were the prophecies, how apposite the types, how exactly was all fulfilled, and how wonderful was it that the Jews should be led to depart from their own customs and purposes, in order to their accomplishment, though they intended nothing less! But it was the determined counsel and appointment of God, (Acts. ii. 23,) who over-rules all the designs of men, and all that to us appears contingent, to the purposes of his own will and glory.

2. He was bruised.—If we distinguish wounded from bruised, the latter may be referred to the sorrows of his soul, for it is expressly said, "It pleased the Lord to bruise him:" that distress broke his heart, filled him with dismay, caused him to be sore amazed and very heavy, and to say to his disciples, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," Matt. xxvi. 38. No words can be more selected and emphatical, than those which the evangelists use in describing his consternation in the garden of Gethsemane. How can this his dejection and terror be accounted for by those who deny that his sufferings and death were a proper atonement of sin; and who suppose, that when he had given to men a perfect rule of life, and commended it to them by his own example, he died, merely to confirm the truth of his doctrine, and to encourage his followers to faithfulness under sufferings! Many of his followers, who were thus witnesses for the truth, and patterns of faithfulness to us, have met death in its most terrible forms with composure, yea, with pleasure, yea, with transports of joy. But is the disciple above his Lord? If christians have triumphed in such circumstances, why did Christ tremble? Not surely because their courage and constancy were greater than his. The causes were entirely different. The martyrs were given up to them who only could kill the body; but Jesus suffered immediately from the hand of God. One stroke of his mighty hand can bruise the spirit of man more sensibly than the united power of all creatures. Jesus died. They that believe in him, are said to sleep in him, 1 Thess. iv. 14. To them death comes disarmed of its sting, wearing a friendly aspect, and bringing a welcome message of dismission from every evil. But the death of Jesus was death indeed, death in all its horrors, the death which sinners had deserved to suffer as transgressors of the law.

3. The chastisement or the punishment of our peace was upon him, that chastisement or punishment on the account of which sinners obtain peace with God.—It properly signifies here, a punishment for instruction or example. Punishments are inflicted, either for the correction of an offender, or for the prevention of evil, or for example to others. The two former reasons could not apply to our Lord. He had committed no evil, he was perfect before, and in suffering. But standing in the place of sinners, and engaged to expiate their offences, he was made a public example of the misery and distress which sin demerited. Thus justice was vindicated in the exercise of mercy, and sinners believing in his name, are exempted from punishment, for his sake, in a way which affords not the least encouragement or extenuation to sin. And thus our peace is procured.

II. The effect of his sufferings for sins not his own. He bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows; he was wounded and bruised for us, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, that by his stripes we may be healed. The Hebrew word here, and the Greek word which the apostle Peter uses in his quotation of this passage, (1 Pet. iii. 24,) which we render *stripes*, is properly the mark which stripes or wounds leave upon the body, or as we say, scars. The scars in his hands, feet, and side, and perhaps other marks of his many wounds, remained after his resurrection. And John saw him in vision, before the throne, as a lamb that had been slain. All these expressions and representations, I apprehend, are designed to intimate to us, that though the death of Messiah is an event long since past, yet the effects and benefits are ever new, and to the eye of faith are ever present. How admirable is this expedient, that the wounds of one, yea, of millions, should be healed, by beholding the wounds of another! Yet this is the language of the gospel, Look and live. "Look unto me, and be ye saved." Three great wounds are ours, guilt, sin, and sorrow; but by contemplating his weals, or scars with an enlightened eye, and by rightly understanding who was thus wounded, and why, all these wounds are healed.

You who live by this medicine speak well of it. Tell to others, as you have an opportunity, what a Saviour you have found. It is usual for those who have been relieved, in dangerous and complicated diseases, by a skilful physician, to commend him to others who are labouring under the like maladies. We often see public acknowledgements to this purpose. If all the persons who have felt the efficacy of a dying Saviour's wounds apprehended by faith, were to publish their cases,

how greatly would his power and grace be displayed! They are all upon record, and will all be known in the great day of his appearing. Some of them are occasionally published, and may be read in our own tongue. And though they are not all related with equal judgment, nor attended with circumstances equally striking, yet there is a sufficiency, in this way, to leave the world without excuse. Not to mention modern accounts of this kind (though many might be mentioned which are indisputably true, and superior to the cavils of gainsayers,) the Confessions of Augustin may be appealed to, as a proof that the gospel is not a system of notions only, but has a mighty power to enlighten the bewildered mind, to subdue the obstinate will, to weaken the force of long confirmed habits of evil, to relieve from distressing fears, and to effect a real, universal, permanent, and beneficial change of sentiment and conduct, such as no similar instance can be found, in the history of mankind, to have been produced by any other principles. But if you are a true christian, in the circle of your connections you will sometimes have a fair opportunity of giving a reason of the hope that is in you. Pray for grace and wisdom to improve such seasons; and if you speak the truth in simplicity and love, you know not but the Lord may give his blessing to your testimony, and honour you as an instrument of good. And to convert one sinner from the error of his way, is an event of greater importance, than the deliverance of a whole kingdom from temporal evil.

Yet remember, if you espouse this cause, a certain consistency of character will be expected from you, without which you had better be silent, than speak in its defence, or profess yourself a sharer in the privileges of the gospel. There are too many persons who treat the great truths we profess as mere opinions, points of speculation, which form the shibboleth of a party: there are others, who think an attachment to them the sure sign of an enthusiastic deluded imagination: and there are others, again, who misrepresent them as unfavourable to morality, and affording a cloak and an encouragement to licentiousness. Beware, lest, by an improper conduct, you lay stumbling-blocks in the way of the blind, strengthen the prejudices of the ignorant, and give weight to the calumnies of the malicious. The people of the world are quick-sighted to the faults of religious professors; and though they affect to despise their principles, they are tolerable judges what that conversation is which only these principles can produce, and always expect it from those who avow them. They will make allowances for others, and admit human infirmity as a plea for their faults, but they will not extend their candour to you. If your zeal for the truth, and your regular attendance upon the ministers who preach it, are not accompanied with a spirit of humility, integrity, and benevolence; if you are passionate, peevish, discontented, censorious, or proud; if they observe that you are greedy of gain, penurious, close-fisted, or hard-hearted; or even if you comply with their customs and spirit, mingle with them in their amusements, and do not maintain a noble singularity by avoiding every appearance of evil; they will not only despise you in their hearts, but they will take the occasion of despising and speaking evil of the truth itself on your account. But if you are all of a piece, and are truly solicitous to adorn your profession, by walking agreeably to the rules of the gospel, and filling up your relations in life to the glory of God, and the good of your fellow-creatures; by thus well-doing, you will put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, (1 Pet. ii. 15,) and in a great measure stop their mouths if you cannot change their hearts. And though they may affect to rail at you, or to ridicule you, they will be constrained to feel a secret reverence for you in their consciences.

But are there any hearts of stone amongst us, who are still unaffected by the love and sufferings of the Son of God; who are still crucifying him afresh, and living in sin, though they hear and know what it cost him to make an atonement for sin? Yet now hear—now look—Behold the Lamb of God! The Lord in mercy open the eyes of your mind. I address you once more. I once more conjure you, by his agony and bloody sweat, by his passion, cross and death, to seek to him that your souls may live. Can you be proof against these arguments? Nay, then, should you live and die thus obstinate, you must perish indeed!

SERMON XX.

SIN CHARGED UPON THE SURETY.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all.—Isaiah liii. 6.

Comparisons, in the scripture, are frequently to be understood with great limitation. perhaps out of many circumstances, one only justly applicable to the case. Thus, when our Lord says, "Behold I come as a thief," (Rev. xvi. 15,) common sense will fix the resemblance to a single point, that he will come suddenly and unexpected. So when wandering sinners are compared to wandering sheep, we have a striking image of the danger of their state, and of their inability to recover themselves. Sheep wandering with-

out a shepherd, are exposed, a defenceless and easy prey, to wild beasts and enemies, and liable to perish for want of pasture; for they are not able either to provide for themselves, or to find the way back to the place from whence they strayed. Whatever they suffer, they continue to wander, and if not sought out, will be lost. Thus far the allusion holds. But sheep in such a situation are not the subjects of blame. They would be highly blamable, if we could suppose them rational creatures; if they had been under the eye of a careful and provident shepherd, had been capable of knowing him, had wilfully and obstinately renounced his protection and guidance, and voluntarily chosen to plunge themselves into danger, rather than to remain with him any longer. Thus it is with man. His wandering is rebellious. God made him upright, but he has sought out to himself many inventions, Eccl. vii. 29. God has appointed for all mankind a safe and pleasant path, by walking in which, they shall find rest to their souls; but they say, We will not walk therein, Jer. vi. 16. They were capable of knowing the consequences of going astray, were repeatedly warned of them, were fenced in by wise and good laws, which they presumptuously broke through. And when they had wandered from him, they were again and again invited to return to him, but they refused. They mocked his messages and his messengers, and preferred the misery they had brought upon themselves, to the happiness of being under his direction and care. Surely he emphatically deserves the name of the good Shepherd, who freely laid down his life to restore sheep of this character!

My text therefore expresses the sentiment of those, and of those only, who are acquainted with the misery of our fallen state, feel their own concern in it, and approve of the method which God has provided for their deliverance and recovery. It contains a confession of their own guilt, and an acknowledgment of his mercy.

I. A confession of guilt and wretchedness.—Sin has deprived us both of the knowledge and presence of God. In consequence of this, we wander, every one to his own way. All are under the power of sin, and all equally strangers to the paths of peace and safety. The paths which sinners choose for themselves are diverse from each other, as inclination or circumstances vary; but however different in appearance, if persisted in, they terminate at last in the same point. They all lead to destruction. We may observe on this head,

1. It is a sufficient proof of our depravity, that we prefer our own ways to the Lord's; nor can he inflict a heavier judgment upon us in this life, than to give us up entirely to the way of our own hearts. He made us to be happy; but as he made us for himself, and gave us a capacity, and a vastness of desire, which only he himself can satisfy, the very constitution and frame of our nature, render happiness impossible to us, unless in a way of dependence upon him, and obedience to his laws. The lamb that grazes in the meadow, and the fish that swims in the stream, are each in their proper element. If you suppose them to change places, they must both perish. But the brute creation have no propensity to such changes as would destroy them. The instincts implanted in them by their great Creator are conducive to their welfare; and to these instincts they are uniformly faithful. If you can conceive of beasts impatient to leave the shore and improve their situation by rushing into the ocean; and the fishes equally earnest to forsake the waters in quest of new and greater advantages upon the dry land; it may illustrate the folly of fallen man, who, turned aside by a deceived heart, refuses life, and seeks death in the error of his ways. For the will of God (if I may so speak) is our proper element; and if we depart from it, our sin unavoidably involves our punishment. We naturally indulge hard thoughts of God, and think the rule he has enjoined us too strict and severe, intended to restrain us from real good, and propose to ourselves some unknown advantages by transgressing it. Thus Satan persuaded Eve, and we derive from her: and though we know that she only gained misery by the experiment, we rashly repeat it for ourselves. The Scripture assures us that the ways of God are pleasant; but we will not be persuaded. Experience proves that the way of transgressors is hard, but we resist the conviction, and hurry on in a round of continual disappointment. Are the proud, the covetuous, the voluptuous, or the ambitious, happy? I appeal to conscience.

2. There is only one right way, but a thousand ways of being wrong. If you are not following him, who has said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life," (John xiv. 6,) you are wandering, you are far from God; for none can come to the Father but by him: and far from peace, for there can be no true peace in the mind unless he bestows and maintains it. The profane and the self-righteous, the open sinner and the hypocrite, the lover of pleasure and the lover of gold, the formal Papist and the formal Protestant, though they seem to travel different roads, though they pity or censure each other, will meet at last (unless the grace of God prevent) in the same state of final and hopeless misery. It is grievous to a spiritual and benevolent mind, to see those who are all wrong disputing among themselves which of them is right. Each one is ready to think himself wise, if the folly in which he allows himself be not

precisely of the same kind with that which he condemns in his neighbour. But the scripture is the invariable rule, to which it is your duty and interest to be conformed now; for it is given by the inspiration and authority of God, and is the standard by which you must be judged at last. Whatever character you bear amongst men, if you have not faith and holiness, you certainly are not in the way of life. For it is written, "He that believeth not, shall be damned;" (Mark xvi. 16;) and again, it is written, "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord," Heb. xii. 14.

3. As wandering sheep are liable to innumerable dangers which they can neither foresee nor prevent, such is our condition, until, by the power of the Holy spirit, we are stopped, and turned, and brought into the fold of the good Shepherd. Oh! the misery of man while living without God in the world! He is exposed every hour to the stroke of death, which would at once separate him from all that he loves, and plunge him into the pit, from whence there is no redemption. And at present he is perpetually harassed with cares and fears, with wants and woes, without guidance or refuge; and yet so blinded as to think himself safe, and that his crooked wandering ways will lead him to happiness!

II. An acknowledgment of mercy.—Where sin abounded, grace has much more abounded. Man sinned, and Messiah suffered. The Lord hath laid, or caused to meet upon him, the iniquity of us all, that is, the punishment due to them. The evils we had deserved were in pursuit of us, but Jesus interposed, and they all seized upon him, and he endured them, that we might be spared. Do we ask upon what grounds? It was on the grounds of his voluntary substitution for sinners, as their covenant head and representative.

So much correspondent to this appointment obtains amongst men, as may show that the idea accords with our notion of justice. If a man be unable to pay a debt, and the creditor should exact the payment from a third person who was no way concerned, it would, with reason, be deemed a very oppressive action. But if it be known that this person became freely bound and responsible for the debtor, he is allowed to be justly liable. But in the present case I make no appeal to human customs. It is a divine appointment, and therefore is and must be right. It was a great design, the triumph of infinite wisdom, the highest effect of the love of God. It is revealed, not to be submitted to our discussion, or that we may sit in judgment upon the propriety of the measure, but it demands our highest admiration and praise, and, like the sun, brings with it that light by which the whole system of our knowledge is illuminated. For till we know this great truth, and are able to see its influence upon every thing we are related to, whatever attainments we may boast, we are in fact encompassed with thick darkness, with darkness which may be felt. For the accomplishment of this design, the Son of God was so manifested in the nature of man, that he, and they who believe in him, participate in a real, though mystical union, and are considered as one: he their living head, they his body, consisting of many members; each of them represented by him, accepted in him, and deriving from his fulness their life, their light, their strength and their joy.

1. He was thus appointed and constituted before the world began, according to the holy counsel and covenant settled from everlasting, (Prov. viii. 31; Tit. i. 2,) for the redemption of sinners. For the fall of man, which rendered his interposition necessary, was not an unexpected contingency, but was foreseen and provided for before man was created upon the earth, yea before the foundations of the earth were laid.

2. After man had sinned, this glorious Head and Surety made known the certainty and benefit of his mediation, and engagement on the behalf of sinners, according to the good pleasure of his wisdom, and as the case required; otherwise, upon the entrance of sin, the full execution of the sentence of the law denounced against the offenders, might perhaps have immediately followed: but he revealed himself. He showed mercy to Adam, covenanted with Noah, walked with Abraham, conversed with Moses, dwelt with his church in the wilderness, and was known by the name of the Holy One of Israel, Isa. liv. 5. David ascribes (Psal. xxiii. 1) to the Shepherd of Israel the name of Jehovah, and Isaiah declares that the Lord of Hosts is the Husband of the church. These characters of Shepherd, and Bridegroom, and Husband, are appropriated to Messiah in the New Testament. He therefore is Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts, whom Abraham, David, and Isaiah worshipped, or his appearance upon earth would be evidently to the disadvantage of those who believe in him. If he were not God, he would be a creature; for there is no medium; and consequently our Shepherd would be infinitely inferior to that Almighty Shepherd who was the refuge, the trust, and the salvation of his people, before Messiah was manifested in the flesh.

3. In the fulness of time he veiled his glory. He who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, took upon him the form of a servant, and was made of a woman, made under the law, Phil. ii. 6, 7; Gal. iv. 4. Then the union between him and the people whom he came into the world to save, was completed; because the

children were partakers of flesh and blood, he likewise took part of the same, Heb. ii. 14. The Word, who in the beginning was God, and was with God, was made flesh, John i. 1. And in our nature, though he knew no sin, he was treated as a sinner for us, to declare the righteousness of God, in his forbearance and goodness to all who had been saved in former ages, and in the forgiveness and salvation of all who should trust in him to the end of time. He suffered once, once for all, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. And now God is revealed, not only as merciful, but as just, in justifying him which believeth in Jesus. God is well pleased in him, and, for his sake, with all who accept him. Their sins are expiated by his sufferings; (Rom. iv. 6; Jer. xxiii. 6;) and his perfect righteousness, the whole of his obedience unto death, is the consideration or ground on which they are accounted righteous.

By virtue of this union likewise he is their life. They receive out of his fulness, as the branches (John xv. 1) derive their life and fruitfulness from the tree whereon they grow; therefore the apostle said, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," Gal. ii. 20. This is the great mystery of christianity, which words alone cannot explain: it is a divine appointment, hidden from those who are wise and prudent in their own sight, but revealed to all who, with the simplicity of children, are desirous of being taught of God, and wait patiently upon him, in the use of his prescribed means, for the light and influence of his Holy Spirit.

From the subject, the substitution of Messiah for sinners, we may learn,

1. How to estimate the evil of sin. That sin is a great evil, is evident by its effects. It deprived Adam of the life and presence of God, and brought death and all natural evil into the world. It caused the destruction of the old world by water. It is the source of all the misery with which the earth is now filled; it will kindle the last great conflagration; yea, it has already kindled that fire which shall never be quenched. But in no view does the sinfulness of sin appear so striking as in this wonderful effect—the suffering and death of Messiah: that notwithstanding the dignity of his person, and the perfection of his obedience to the law, and that though he prayed in his agonies, that if it were possible the cup might pass from him, (Luke xxiii. 42,) yet, if sinners were to be saved, it was indispensably necessary that he should drink it. This shows the evil of sin in the strongest light; and in this light it is viewed by all who derive life from his death, and healing from his wounds. We may be afraid of the consequence of sin from other considerations, but it is only by looking to him who was pierced (Zech. xii. 10) for our transgressions, that we can learn to hate it.

2. The complete justification of those who believe in him. They are delivered from all condemnation, Rom. viii. 1. Every charge against them is over-ruled by this plea, that Christ has died, and risen on their behalf, and ever liveth to make intercession for them. And though they are still in a state of discipline, for the mortification of sin yet remaining in them, and though, for the trial, exercise, and growth of their faith, it is still needful that they pass through many tribulations; yet none of these are strictly and properly penal. They are not the tokens of God's displeasure, but fatherly chastisements and tokens of his love, designed to promote the work of grace in their hearts, and to make them partakers of his holiness, Heb. xii. 6—11. Though necessary at present, they will not be necessary long, and therefore the hour is at hand when all tears shall be wiped away from their eyes, and they shall weep no more. His true servants, in the midst of the storms by which they are tossed on the tempestuous sea of this life, are no less safe, and, notwithstanding their imperfections, are no less beloved, than those who have already escaped out of the reach of every evil, and are now before the throne.

3. The reason why believers are not wearied, nor overpowered, by all the difficulties of their service, nor by all the arts and efforts of their enemies. They are one with Christ. He who has all power in heaven and in earth is engaged for their support. When they faint, he revives them; when they are wounded, he heals them; when their foot slippeth, he upholdeth them. He has said, "because I live, ye shall live also." Therefore, who can prevail against them, when their life is hidden with Christ in God? And farther, the knowledge of their Saviour's love, and of the holy, awful, yet amiable and endearing character of God displayed in his mediation, is the source of their love, gratitude, and cheerful obedience. It is this makes hard things easy, and bitter things sweet. The love of Christ constraineth them, 2 Cor. v. 14. They look to him and are enlightened. And when they consider who he is, in what way, and at what a price he redeemed them, and what he has prepared for them; when they attend to his gracious word, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life;" Rev. ii. 10;) —they out of weakness, are made strong; they are inspired with fresh courage; they take up their cross with cheerfulness, and can adopt the language of the apostle, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear, so that I may finish my course with joy," Acts xx. 24.

SERMON XXI.

MESSIAH DERIDED UPON THE CROSS.

All they that see me, laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted in the Lord, that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. Psalm xxii. 7, 8.

FALLEN man, though alienated from the life of God, and degraded, with respect to many of his propensities and pursuits, to a level with the beasts that perish, is not wholly destitute of kind and compassionate feelings towards his fellow-creatures. While self-interest does not interfere, and the bitter passions of envy, hatred, malice, and revenge, are not roused into exercise, he has a degree of instinctive sympathy with them in their sufferings, and a disposition to assist them, if he can do it without much detriment to himself. The source of these social feelings we express by the term humanity; which seems to imply a consciousness that they properly belong to our nature, and that we ought, at least, to be always, and universally affected in this manner, when occasions offer. But while the heart is under the government of self, our humanity is very partial and limited; and it is to be ascribed to the goodness of God, rather than to any real goodness in man, that it is not wholly extinguished. Were this the case, and were the native evils of the heart left to exert themselves in their full strength and without control, earth would be the very image of hell, and there could be no such thing as society. But to prevent things from running into utter confusion, God mercifully preserves in mankind some social dispositions. They are, however, so weak in themselves, so powerfully counteracted by the stronger principles of our depravity, and so frequently suppressed by obstinate habits of wickedness, that in the present state of things, we may almost as justly define man, (whatever impropriety there may seem in the expression,) by saying, "He is an inhuman creature," as by ascribing to him the benevolent properties of humanity.

The rage, cruelty, and savage insensibility, with which sin and Satan have poisoned our nature, never appear in so strong a light, as when they assume a religious form; when ignorance, bigotry, and blind zeal, oppose the will and grace of God, under a pretence of doing him service. By this infatuation, every hateful passion is sanctified, and every feeling of humanity stifled. Thus, though the sufferings of the most atrocious malefactors usually excite pity in the spectators, and often draw tears from their eyes, yet the agonies of God's persecuted servants, under the most exquisite tortures which malice could invent, have frequently raised no other emotions than those of derision and scorn. My text leads us to consider the highest instance of this kind. The twenty-second psalm undoubtedly refers to Messiah. It begins with the very words which he uttered upon the cross; nor could David speak of himself, when he said, "They pierced my hands and my feet." He was God's servant in the most eminent sense; and the service he performed, was an uninterrupted course of benevolence to the souls and bodies of men. He spent his life in going about doing good; (Acts i. 38;) nor could his enemies fix a single stain upon his conduct. Yet they thirsted for his blood; and, because he came into the world to save sinners, they accomplished their cruel designs. We have already seen how he was treated by the servants and by the soldiers, when condemned by the Jewish council, and by the Roman governor. This prophecy was fulfilled when he hung upon the cross. There have been persons in our own days, whose crimes have excited such detestation, that the populace would probably have torn them in pieces, before, and even after their trial, if they could have had them in their power. Yet when these very obnoxious persons have been executed according to their sentence, if, perhaps, there was not one spectator who wished them to escape, yet neither was one found so lost to sensibility, as to insult them in their dying moments. But when Jesus suffers, all that see him, laugh him to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head; they insult his character and his hope. The evangelists furnish us with an affecting comment upon this passage. They inform us by whom he was thus scorned and derided; they mention some circumstances, which strongly mark the peculiar and excessive contempt with which he was treated; and they take notice of the special scope and object of their insults, namely, the gracious purpose he had often expressed towards sinners, and the strong confidence he had vowed in God his Father.

I. The persons who scorned and derided him were various, and of different characters.

1. The chief priests, elders, and rulers of the people. When these, who were held in ignorant admiration by the multitude, set the example, we do not wonder that it was generally followed. They had been his most avowed and determined enemies, they had long conspired to take away his life, and in the appointed hour their plots were permitted to succeed. They now rejoiced in their success. By their office as teachers and expounders of the law, they ought to have pointed him out to the people as the object of their reverence and hope; but having rejected him themselves, they employed all their authority and influence to make him

the object of general contempt. And lest the extremity of his torments should awaken sentiments of commiseration in the multitude, they were the first, and the loudest, in reviling him, as he hung upon the cross.

2. The populace derided him. They had been instigated by the priests to demand his death of Pilate, when he was desirous of dismissing him, and rather to insist that Barabbas should be spared, Matt. xxvii. 20. The populace, though no less ignorant, were less malicious than their leaders. At different times, when they heard his public discourses, and saw his wonderful works, they had been staggered, and constrained to say, "Is not this the Son of David?" and not many days before, the popular cry had been strongly in his favour; (Matt. xxi. 10, 11;) though quickly after, it was, "Crucify him, crucify him," Luke xxiii. 21. As the sea, though sometimes smooth, is always disposed to obey the impulse of the wind, so the common people, though easily roused to oppose the truth, would perhaps be quiet, if they were left to themselves; but there are seldom wanting artful and designing men, who, by a pretended regard for religion, and by misrepresentations, work upon their passions and prejudices, and stir them up to a compliance with their purposes. The priests by degrees wrought the populace up, first to reject the Messiah, and then to join their leaders in mocking and deriding him.

3. The Roman soldiers, who had contemptuously clothed him with a scarlet robe, and bowed the knee before him in derision, continued to mock him when hanging upon the cross. The Romans, to whom many monarchies were become subject and tributary, affected to despise the name of king; and they held the Jewish nation in peculiar contempt. The title, therefore, of king of the Jews, affixed to his cross, afforded them a subject for the keenest sarcasm.

4. Yea, such is the hardness of the human heart, that one of the malefactors, (Luke xxiii. 39,) who was crucified by his side, unaffected with his own guilt, and insensible of the just judgment of God, and of the account he was soon to render at his awful tribunal, seemed to seek some relief in the midst of his agonies, by joining with the priests and people, in railing on the innocent Jesus, who was suffering before his eyes. Thus he was the object of universal derision. They who were at the greatest distance in character and sentiment, who differed from, despised, and hated each other, on other accounts, united as one man, in expressing every possible mark of hatred and scorn against him, who had done nothing amiss.

II. They showed their scorn in the most pointed and cruel manner. Not only they who had clamoured for his death derided him, but others who were only passing by upon their ordinary occasions, could not pass on till they had stopped a while to insult him, wagging their heads, and reminding him of what he had formerly said, and charging him with the supposed folly and arrogance of his claims. They jested upon his wants; when he said, "I thirst," they gave him vinegar to drink, mingled with gall. They jested upon his words; when he uttered his dolorous complaint, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" some of them, with a malicious turn, (which possibly was applauded for wit by others,) from the sound of the beginning of the sentence, took occasion to suggest, that by saying, *Eli, Eli*, he called for *Elias* the prophet, to come to his assistance. Alas! of what dreadful malignity and obduracy is the heart of man capable? How may we conceive the heavenly hosts to have been affected with this scene, when they beheld their Lord, the object of their worship and supreme love, thus treated by sinners? But it behoved him thus to suffer, (Luke xxiv. 26,) for he had undertaken to expiate the sins of many of his murderers, and to offer such satisfaction to the justice and law of God, as might render it consistent with his holiness and truth to pardon the vilest offenders, who should trust in his name, in all future ages. Therefore there was no voice, arrest, or interposition from the heavenly world—thus he must be tormented, thus he must be scorned, and suspended as a spectacle to angels and to men, till he had paid the full price of redemption, and could say, "It is finished." Then, and not till then, he bowed his head, and breathed out his spirit into his Father's hands. There were, however, attestations to his dignity, in this his lowest state. He showed, by his gracious answer to the penitent malefactor, that he had still authority upon earth to forgive sin, and to save to the uttermost; and the sun withdrew his light, and the rocks rent, though daring sinners derided and mocked.

III. The bulk of the people bore their part in this tragedy through precipitation and ignorance. In his prayer for their forgiveness, (a prayer which was signally answered after his ascension,) he mentioned the only extenuation their wickedness could possibly admit. They knew not what they did. It was otherwise with those who were principally concerned in procuring his death. Long before, when they could not deny the reality of his miracles, they ascribed them to the agency of Beelzebub. By this malicious, wilful opposition to the strongest evidence of fact, against the conviction of their own minds, and by their violent, determined rejection of his mission, they committed the unpardonable sin. They spoke and sinned against the Holy Spirit. This sin no one can have committed, while he is fearful lest he has committed it; for it essentially consists in a de-

liberate and wilful refusal of the only means of salvation. It is the sign of final absolute impenitence. They who had thus ascribed his miracles to Beelzebub, expressed the same height of enlightened malice against him in his dying agonies, and there was a poignancy in their insults, of which the ignorant multitude were not capable.

1. They reproached his great design, for which he came into the world, "He saved others, himself he cannot save," Matt. xxvii. 42. How different is the force of the same words, according to the intention of the speaker! When they said "His blood be upon us. and upon our children," (ver. 25,) they spoke the very language of the hearts of those who love him, and who derive all their hopes and all their happiness from the application of his blood to their consciences. But, to themselves, it proved the most dreadful imprecation. So, it will be the grateful acknowledgment of his people in time, and to eternity, that when he was resolved to save them, the difficulties in the way were so great, that neither his prayers, nor his tears, nor his unspotted innocence, could prevail to save himself. But for this his love to sinners, his enemies reviled him. Nor would they have offered to believe if he would come down from the cross, had they supposed there was the least probability of such an event, for they had often rejected evidence equal to what they now demanded.

2. They reproached him for his trust and confidence in God. He had said that God was (ἴδιον) his own Father; (John v. 18;) and they understood him to use the expression in so high a sense, as thereby to make himself equal with God. Had they misunderstood him, had he not really intended what they laid to his charge, surely he would have explained himself. This was the very ground of their proceeding against him before the council, and the formal reason of the sentence of death they pronounced against him. How often did he appeal to the testimony of the scriptures, and of John, whom they durst not but acknowledge to have been a prophet, and to his own mighty works, in support of his claim? But having fastened him upon the cross, they triumphed, and unwittingly expressed their exultation, in the very words which David had foretold should be used to Messiah. So exactly were the scriptures fulfilled, by those who use their utmost endeavours to evade them, and to prevent their accomplishment.

But what is all this to us? It is very much to us. Christ could suffer but once, yet we read of those who crucify him afresh. His gospel represents his personal ministry, declares his character, reveals his love, produces the same effects in those who receive it, and they who oppose it are considered as opposing him, and are influenced by the same spirit which instigated the unbelieving Jews. It is to be hoped that many reject and scorn it, as the multitude did of old, through ignorance; and that the intercession of him who prayed for those that knew not what they did, will prevail for their conversion. Whenever their eyes are opened, they will be pricked to the heart, (Acts ii. 37,) and will then gladly inquire of those whom they now despise, What they must do to be saved? But it is to be feared, there are in christian countries many persons who too nearly resemble the spirit and conduct of the Jewish rulers, whose opposition proceeds from rooted enmity to the truth, persisted in against light that has sometimes forced upon their minds, and who, though convinced, will not be persuaded. They who despise, calumniate, and scorn the believers of the gospel, would certainly offer the like treatment to the Author of it, if he was within their reach. They are ill-treated for his sake, and he considers it as an affront to himself. Thus he said to Saul of Tarsus, when breathing out threatenings against his disciples, "Why persecutest thou me?" They who reject his ministers, reject him, Luke x. 16. They who speak disdainfully of his dying himself to save others; they who reproach or ridicule the humble confidence of his people; who censure and revile their hopes and comforts derived from his good word, as enthusiasm or hypocrisy; who have no compassion for their distresses, but rather wound them as with a sword in their bones, saying unto them, Where is now your God? (Psal. cxv. 2,) are certainly treading, if not altogether with equal vehemence, in the footsteps of the Jewish rulers.—May the Lord in mercy show them the danger of their path, and give them a timely apprehension of the destruction to which it leads! That they may humble themselves to his will, implore his pardon, espouse his cause, and experience the comforts and privileges of that gospel which they have hitherto reviled and scorned.

SERMON XXII.

MESSIAH UNPITIED, AND WITHOUT COMFORTER.

Reproach [rebuke] *hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness; and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none.*—Psalm xix. 20.

THE greatness of suffering cannot be certainly estimated by the single consideration of the immediate apparent cause; the impression it actually makes upon the mind of the sufferer must likewise be taken into the ac-

count. That which is a heavy trial to one person, may to another be much lighter, and perhaps no trial at all; and a state of outward prosperity, in which the eye of a bystander can see nothing wanting to happiness, may be, and I doubt not often is, a state of torment to the possessor. On the other hand, we know that the consolations with which it has sometimes pleased God to cheer his suffering servants, have enabled them to rejoice in the greatest extremities. They have triumphed upon the rack, and while their flesh was consuming by the fire. The Lord has had many followers, who, for his sake, have endured scourgings, and tortures, and terrible deaths, not only without reluctance or dismay, but without a groan. But he himself was terrified, amazed, and filled with anguish, when he suffered for us. Shall we say, The disciples, in such cases, have been superior to their Master, when yet they acknowledged that they derived all their strength and resolution from him? This difference cannot be well accounted for by those who deny that his sufferings were a proper atonement for sin, and who can see no other reason for his death, than that by dying he was to seal the truth of his doctrine, and to propose himself to us as an example of constancy and patience. But the great aggravation of Messiah's sufferings was the suspension of those divine supports which enable his people to endure the severest afflictions to which he calls them. Perhaps some persons who acknowledge our Lord's true character, may, upon that ground, think his agonies less insupportable, since he was not a mere man, but God in the human nature. It was indeed the dignity of his person that gave influence and efficacy to all that he did and suffered for sinners. It is likewise true that the weight laid upon him was more than any mere creature could sustain. I would speak with reverence and reserve upon a point which is too high for our weak minds fully to comprehend; but in whatever way the nature of man, which he assumed, was upheld by his eternal power and Godhead, we may venture to affirm that he derived no sensible comfort from it. For we have his own testimony, that in this sense God had forsaken him. The divine nature could neither bleed nor suffer. He was truly and properly a man; and as a man he suffered, and he suffered alone. Many of his servants have rejoiced while they were tormented, because God overbalanced all they felt with the light of his countenance; but the Saviour himself, deprived of this light, experienced to the uttermost, all that sin deserved, that was not inconsistent with the perfection of his character. My text expresses, so far as human words and ideas can reach, his exquisite distress, when he bore our sins in his own body, upon the tree. Reproach broke his heart, and when he looked for pity and comfort, he found none.

I. Reproach hath broken my heart.—We must not confine our thoughts here to the reproach of his enemies. The passage in the Messiah expresses it agreeably to the version of the Psalms used in our liturgy, *Thy rebuke.* Though he knew no sin, he was made sin for us. He was accounted and treated as a sinner. Now a sinner is deservedly the greatest object of contempt in the universe, and indeed the only object of deserved contempt. Thus he incurred the reproach of the law and justice of God. The Holy Father, viewing the Son of his love in this light, as charged with the sins of his people, forsook him. God infinitely hates sin, and will have no fellowship with it; and of this he gave the most awful proof, by forsaking his beloved Son, when he took upon him to answer for the sins of men. Then the sword of the Almighty awoke against him, and he spared him not, Zech. xiii. 7.

This rebuke broke his heart. Let broken-hearted sinners look by faith upon a broken-hearted Saviour. The phrase denotes woe and dejection inconceivable, with a failure of all resource. Any thing may be borne while the spirit, the heart remains firm, but if the heart itself be broken, who can endure? "A wounded spirit who can bear?" Proverbs, xviii. 14.

It is not therefore, surprising, that he says, "I am full of heaviness." In the evangelists we read, that "he began to be sore amazed and very heavy;" (Matt. xxvi. 37, 38; Mark xiv. 33;) and he said to his disciples, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." The most emphatical words are used to describe his sensation of the bitter conflict of his soul in the garden of Gethsemane, when as yet the hand of man had not touched him. He began (ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι) to be amazed or astonished. It properly signifies, to be struck with terror and surprise by some supernatural power, such as Belshazzar felt when he suddenly saw the handwriting against him upon the wall; (Dan. v. 6;) and (ἀδημονεῖν) to be very heavy, sated with grief, full, so as to be incapable of more. Some critics explain the word, as importing such an oppression of mind as quite unfits a person for converse or society. [Compare Job xxx. 29.] He said "My soul is (περίλυπος) exceeding sorrowful," —surrounded, encompassed with sorrows. It is added, he was in (ἀγωνία) an agony; (Luke xxii. 44;) a consternation of mind, such as arises from the prospect of some impending, unavoidable evil, like the suspense of mariners upon the point of shipwreck, who tremble equally at the view of the raging waves behind them, and the rocky shore before their eyes, on which they expect in a few moments to be dashed. The evils he was to bear and to expiate were now collect-

ing to a point, and formed a dark and tremendous storm, just ready to break upon his devoted head, and the prospect filled his soul with unutterable horror, so that his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Many have sweat under extremity of pain or terror, but his agonies, and the effect of them, were peculiar to himself: His sweat was blood.

This is not a subject for declamation. It rather becomes us to adore in humble silence the manifestation of the goodness and severity of God (Rom. xi. 22) in the Redeemer's sufferings, than to indulge conjecture and the flights of imagination. What is expressly revealed we may assert, contemplate, and admire. His soul was made an offering for sin, Isa. liii. 10. We know but little of the extreme malignity of sin, because we have but faint views of the majesty, holiness, and goodness of God, against whom it is committed. Yet a single sin, if clothed with all its aggravations, and the guilt of it brought home with power to the heart, is sufficient to make the sinner a terror to himself. Adam had sinned but once when he lost all comfort and confidence in God, and sought to hide himself. We have but slight thoughts of the extent of sin. Not only positive disobedience, but want of conformity to the law of God, is sinful. Every rising thought which does not comport with that reverence, dependence, and love which is due to God from creatures constituted, furnished, and indebted as we are, is sinful. The sins of one person in thought, word, and deed, sins of omission and commission, are innumerable. What then is contained in the collective idea, in what the scripture calls the sin of the world? What then must be the atonement, the consideration on the account of which the great God is no less righteous than merciful, in forgiving the sins, which his inviolable truth, and the honour of his government, engage him to punish. And they are punished, though forgiven. They were charged upon Jesus; they exposed him to a rebuke which broke his heart. They filled him with heaviness. When, therefore, we are assured that the justice of God is satisfied, with respect to every sinner of the race of mankind, who, in obedience to the divine command, makes the sufferings of the Saviour his plea for pardon, and trusts in him for salvation, and that upon this one ground they are freed from all condemnation, and accepted as children; when we are told that the glory of the divine perfections is displayed in the highest, by this method of saving millions who deserved to perish, we safely infer the greatness of the cause from the greatness of the effect. The sufferings of Christ, which free a multitude of sinners from the guilt of innumerable sins, must have been inconceivably great indeed:

II. Under this accumulated distress, though his will was perfectly submissive to the will of God, and his determination fixed to endure all that the case required; yet as he was truly a man, he felt like a man. His fortitude was very different from a stoical hardness of spirit. All the affections of pure humanity, whatever does not imply sin, such as impatience under suffering, and an undue, premature desire of deliverance, operated in him, as they might do in one of us. It was no impeachment of his innocence, or of his willingness, that he wished, if it were possible, for some relief or alleviation of his misery. He looked, as we do when we are in heaviness, for some to have pity on him, and to comfort him, but there was none. Though the pity of our friends is often ineffectual, and can afford us no real assistance, yet it gives a little relief to have those about us to whom we can open our minds, who will sympathize with us, and compassionately attend to our complaints, if they can do no more. And to be neglected and forsaken in extremity, especially by those who have professed great friendship, or are under great obligations to us, will be felt as an aggravation of the most distressing case that can be imagined. But thus it was with Messiah. He had to complain, not only of the cruelty of his enemies, but of the insensibility and inconstancy of those who had professed the most cordial attachment to him. The impression thus made upon him as a man was such, that it is distinctly specified in the prophetical enumeration of the ingredients which composed the bitter cup of his sufferings.

He was not only apprehended by cruel men, but betrayed into their hands by one whom he had admitted into the number of his select apostles, who had been employed in his service, favoured with access to him in his more retired hours, and was present, with the rest, when he kept his last passover, and took his solemn and affectionate leave of them before he entered upon his passion. It was not an avowed enemy, but one of the twelve who dipped with him in the dish, that was guilty of this enormous ingratitude and treachery. How keen are our resentments, if those to whom we have shown great kindness are discovered to have studied our ruin while they wore the mask of friendship? Though Messiah was incapable of any sinful perturbation of mind, he was very capable of being painfully affected by the conduct of Judas: he had reason to look for pity from him, but he found none.

When he entered the garden of Gethsemane, he commanded, may I not say, he entreated, his disciples to tarry there and watch with him. And to engage their utmost attention, he spoke plainly to them of his distress, saying, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." Yet when he returned

unto them, the first, the second, yea, the third time, he found them sleeping. How tender, yet how forcible was his expostulation! "Could ye not watch one hour?" Matt. xxvii. 40. What! could they know that their Lord was in an agony, wrestling with strong cries and tears, and yet sleep! as regardless of his sorrows as of their own approaching danger! Were our dearest friends to show themselves equally insensible when we were in extreme anguish, would not their indifference wound our spirits? He also was a man; and we may conceive it some addition to his grief, that when he looked to them for pity and comfort, he found none.

When he was apprehended, notwithstanding their former protestation of zeal and love, they all forsook him and fled, Matt. xxvi. 56. They sought their own safety, and left him in the hands of his enemies. The apostle Paul was thus deserted, and his expressions intimate that he felt it. "At my first answer, no man stood by me, all men forsook me," 2 Tim. iv. 16. He had imbibed likewise the spirit of his master, and prayed that it might not be laid to their charge. And though the Lord Jesus pitied and excused the weakness of his disciples, and permitted them to take care of themselves, it was in them an instance how little he could depend upon those who were under the strongest obligations to him.

But Peter followed his Lord to the hall of the High Priest, and there saw him, with his own eyes, insulted, arraigned, and unjustly condemned. Might he not expect that Peter, the most active and earnest of all his followers, would have pitied him, at least at such a time. Alas! instead of pitying him, Peter denied him; he denied, with oaths and imprecations, that he had any knowledge of him, whom he had seen transfigured upon the mount, and agonizing in the garden. We read that the Lord turned and looked upon Peter, Luke xxiv. 61. Who can conceive the energy of that look? It was full of meaning, and Peter well understood it. Surely, though a look of tenderness and compassion, it conveyed the expostulation of an injured benefactor, no less forcibly, than if all who were present had heard him say, "Peter, is this the pity I am to expect from thee?"

When he was nailed to the cross, he was surrounded only by enemies. These, as we have seen, far from pitying, or attempting to comfort him, derided and mocked him. How have some of us felt for our friends in their dying hours, though we have seen every possible attention paid to them, and every thing provided and done for them that could administer to their relief and comfort! But they who have the faith which realizes unseen things, have beheld their best Friend expiring in tortures, and insulted by his murderers in his last moments.

But had all his disciples been near him, and had all his enemies been his friends, still, in his situation, he would have been alone. The loss of the light of God's countenance will, to the soul that has enjoyed it, create a universal solitude, and render every earthly good tasteless, in proportion as that soul is united to him in love; and still more, if there be superadded a sense of his displeasure. They who have never tasted that the Lord is good, not having known the difference, can have no conception of this subject. Their minds are at present occupied with earthly things; and while they are thus engaged with trifles, they cannot believe, though they are repeatedly told it, that to an immortal spirit, a separation from the favour of God involves in it the very essence of misery. But should death surprise them in their sins, tear them from all that they have seen and loved, and plunge them into an unknown, unchangeable world, then (alas! too late!) they will be sensible of their immense, irreparable loss, in being cut off from the fountain of life and comfort. A suspension of this divine presence, with an awful sense and feeling of what those for whom he made himself responsible deserved, was the most dreadful part of the Redeemer's sufferings. He was perfectly united to the will and love of his heavenly Father, and, by the perfect holiness of his nature, incapable of tasting satisfaction in any thing else, if his presence were withdrawn. But when he endured the curse of the law for us, he looked to God for pity and comfort, but he found none.

In this glass we are to contemplate the demerit of sin. But there are some sufferings due to the impenitent sinner, of which Messiah was not capable. I mean the consciousness of personal guilt, the gnawings of a remorseful conscience, and the rage of despair. If we add the idea of eternity to the whole, we may form some faint judgment of what they are delivered from who believe in him, and what misery awaits those who presume to reject him. Awful thought! to reject the only Saviour. If they refuse his mediation, they must answer in their own persons. Then they will find no pity, no comforter! For who, or what, can comfort, when the Lord God Omnipotent arises to punish? What will your pleasures, your wealth, or friends, do for you, when the hand of the Lord shall touch you to the quick? What smile can you expect will support you against the terror of his frown?

Should any of you hear the Messiah performed again, then and there, if not before, may God impress upon your heart the sense of this passage. Then you will understand, that the sufferings of the Son of God are by no means a proper subject for the amusement of a vacant hour.

SERMON XXIII.

NO SORROW LIKE MESSIAH'S SORROW.

Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow!—Lament. i. 12.

Although the scriptures of the Old Testament, the law of Moses, the Psalms, and the prophecies, (Luke xxiv. 44,) bear a harmonious testimony to Messiah, it is not necessary to suppose, that every single passage has an immediate and direct relation to him. A method of exposition has frequently obtained, of a fanciful and allegorical cast, under the pretext of spiritualizing the word of God. Ingenious men, and sometimes men not very ingenious, have endeavoured to discover types and mysteries in the plainest historical parts, where we have no sufficient evidence that the Holy Spirit intended to teach them. And upon very slight grounds a proof has been attempted of the great doctrines of the gospel, which may be proved, much more safely and solidly, from the passages of scripture in which they are plainly and expressly revealed. But by taking this course, instead of throwing real light upon the places they have in this manner attempted to explain, they have perplexed their hearers and readers, and led them to question, whether there be any fixed and determinate sense of scripture that may be fully depended upon. It is true, when we have the authority of an inspired expositor to lead us, we may follow him without fear; but this will not warrant us to strike out a path for ourselves, and trust to our conjectures, where we have not such an infallible guide. The epistle to the Hebrews is a key to explain to us many passages in a higher sense than perhaps we should have otherwise understood them. But it is best for us to keep within safe bounds, and to propose our own sentiments, when not supported by New Testament authority, with great modesty, lest we should incur the censure of being wise above what is written. I may, without scruple, affirm, that the history of Sarah and Hagar is an allegory referring to the two covenants, because the apostle Paul (Gal. iv. 24) has affirmed it before me; but if I attempted to spiritualize the history of Leah and Rachel likewise, you would not be bound to believe me without proof. I may preach the gospel of Christ from a text which mentions the manna or the brazen serpent, (John iii. 14; vi. 31, 35,) because our Lord has expounded these things as typical of himself; but I must not be confident that every resemblance which I think I can trace is the true sense of the place; because I may imagine many resemblances and types which the scripture does not authorize.

There is, however, a useful way of preaching, by accommodation, that is, when the literal sense is first clearly stated, to apply the passage, not directly to prove a doctrine as if really contained in it, but only to illustrate the doctrine expressly taught in other parts of the scripture. Thus, for instance, if the question of Jonadab to Amnon (2 Sam. xiii. 4) were chosen for the subject of a discourse, "Why art thou, being a king's son, lean from day to day?" the history of the context directly proves the malignity of sinful inordinate desire, and the misery of those who are under its dominion; that it poisons every situation in life, and renders the sinner incapable of satisfaction, though he were a king's son. The form of the question might then lead to observe, That believers are king's sons, to show what are the great privileges of their adoption; and to enquire how it comes to pass, that many persons so highly privileged are lean, that is uncomfortable, weak and languishing in their profession? These points might not improperly be introduced by way of accommodation, though they are not directly deducible from the literal sense of the question.

The text I have just read to you has led me into this digression. I find it in the series of the passages in the Messiah; but I am not sure, that in the literal sense it immediately refers to him. It is a pathetic exclamation, by which the prophet Jeremiah expresses his grief, or rather the grief of Jerusalem, when the sins of the people had given success to the Chaldean army, and the temple and the city were destroyed. Jerusalem is poetically considered as a woman, lately reigning a queen among the nations, but now a captive, dishonoured, spoiled, and sitting upon the ground. She intreats the commiseration of those who pass by, and asks, if there be any sorrow like unto her sorrow? Such a question has often been in the heart and in the mouth of the afflicted, especially in an hour of impatience. We are all, in our turns, disposed to think our own trials peculiarly heavy, and our own cases singular. But to them who ask this question, we may answer, Yes—there has been a sorrow greater than yours, greater than the sorrow of Jeremiah, or of Jerusalem. They who have heard of the sorrows of Jesus, will surely, upon the hearing of this question, be reminded of him, whether it was the intention of the prophet to personate him or not. If we conceive of him hanging upon the cross, and speaking in this language to us, "Was ever any sorrow like my sorrow?" must not we reply with admiration and gratitude, "No, Lord, never was love, never was grief, like thine."

The expostulation and the question are equally applicable to the sufferings of Messiah. The former indeed is not inserted in the Oratorio, but I am not willing to leave it out. The highest wonder ever exhibited to

the world, to angels, and men, is the Son of God suffering and dying for sinners. Next to this, hardly any thing is more astonishing to an enlightened mind—than the gross and stupid insensibility with which the sufferings of the Saviour are treated, and the indifference with which this wonderful event is regarded by creatures who are so nearly concerned in it. If they believe in him, they will be healed by his wounds, and live by his death. If they finally reject him, they must perish; and their guilt and misery will be greatly aggravated by what they have heard of him! But sin has so blinded our understandings and hardened our hearts, that we have naturally no feeling either for him or for ourselves.

I. Is the expostulation suited to any person here? Can I, with propriety, say to some who are now present, Has this subject been hitherto nothing to you? Then, surely, you have not heard of it before; and, therefore, now you do hear of it, you will, you must be affected. If you were to read in the common newspapers, that a benevolent and excellent person had fallen into the hands of murderers, who had put him to death in the most cruel manner, would it not be something to you? Could you avoid impressions of surprise, indignation, and grief? Surely, if this transaction were news to you, it would engross your thoughts. But alas! you have rather heard of it too often, till it has become to you as a worn-out tale. I am willing to take it for granted that you allow the fact. You believe that Jesus Christ suffered under Pontius Pilate, was condemned by the Jews, and crucified by the Romans. And is it possible this should be nothing to you? Is it too insignificant to engage or deserve your attention? And yet, perhaps, you have wept at a representation or a narrative which you know was wholly founded in fiction. How strange! What! the sorrow of Jesus nothing to you! when you admit that he suffered for sinners, and will probably admit that you are a sinner. No longer then boast of your sensibility! your heart must be a heart of stone. Yet thus it is with too many; your tempers, your conduct, give evidence that hitherto the death of Jesus has been nothing to you. You would not have acted otherwise, at least you would not have acted worse, if you had never heard of his name. Were his sufferings any thing to you, is it possible, that you would live in the practice of those sins, for which no atonement could suffice but his blood! Were you duly affected by the thought of his crucifixion, is it possible that you could crucify him afresh, and put him to open shame, by bearing the name of a christian, and yet living in a course unsuitable to the spirit and precepts of his gospel? But if you are indifferent to his grief, is it nothing to you on your own account? What! is it nothing to you whether you are saved or perish; whether you are found at his right, or his left hand, in the great day of his appearance; or whether he shall then say to you, "Come, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom prepared for you;" or, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire?" Matt. xxvi. 34, 41. There is no medium, no alternative. If you refuse this, there remaineth no other sacrifice for sin. This lamentable indifference to the Redeemer's sorrows, is a full proof of the baseness and wickedness of the human heart; and it is felt as such, when the Holy Spirit convinces of sin. Natural conscience may excite a painful conviction of the sinfulness of many actions. But this stupid unbelief of the heart is, if I may so speak, the sin of sins, it is the root and source of every evil, and yet so congenial to our very frame, as we are depraved creatures, that God alone can make the sinner feel it; (John xvi. 9;) and when he does feel it, the sense of it wounds and grieves him more than all his other sins.

II. With respect to the question, if we rightly understand what has been observed from the scripture-history, in the six preceding sermons, concerning the particulars of his passion, we may answer without hesitation, Never was suffering, or sorrow, like that which Messiah endured in the day of the Lord's fierce anger. It is possible that history, which is little more than a detail of the cruelty and wickedness of mankind, may furnish us with instances of many persons who have suffered excruciating torments, and have even been mocked and insulted in their agonies: But,

1. Was there ever a character of his dignity and excellence treated in such a manner? Job considered his former state as a great aggravation of his sufferings. He enlarges upon the respect which had been shown him in his prosperity. "When I went out to the gate, through the city, the young men saw me and hid themselves, the aged arose and stood up. When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me," Job xxix. 8, 11. But afterwards, speaking of fools, of base men, of the vilest of the earth, he adds, "Now am I their song, yea, their by-word. They abhor me, and spare not to spit in my face. They mar my path, they set forward my calamity, they come upon me as a wide breaking in of waters," chap. xxx. 8—14. But Jesus was the Lord of glory. He whom all the angels of God worshipped, was buffeted and spit upon by the lowest rabble. If a great king was degraded from his throne, and exposed to the derision of slaves, this would be a small thing compared with the humiliation of him, who, in his own right, was King of kings, and Lord of lords.

2. Was there ever so innocent a sufferer? When Aaron lost his two sons, he held his

peace, Lev. x. 3. A little before he had been guilty of making the golden calf. The remembrance of this offence composed his mind under his great trial. He saw that he deserved a still heavier punishment, and was silent. In like manner, David, when his rebellious son Absalom conspired against his life, was patient; he remembered the adultery and murder he had committed; and, though he mourned under his afflictions, he durst not complain, 2 Sam. xvi. 11. The malefactor upon the cross submitted to his sentence, because he was a malefactor, saying, "And we indeed justly," Luke xxiv. 41. It is thus with all who know themselves. Under their severest afflictions, they admit the propriety of the prophet's question, "Why should a living man complain!" Lam. iii. 39. And they acknowledge, that it is of the Lord's great mercy they are not utterly consumed. But Jesus was holy, harmless, and undefiled; he had fulfilled the whole law, and had done nothing amiss; yet he yielded himself as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth, Is. liii. 7.

3. Did ever any other sufferer experience in an equal degree the day of God's fierce anger? In the greatest of our sufferings, in those which bear the strongest marks of the Lord's displeasure, there is always some mitigation, some mixture of mercy. At the worst, we have still reason to acknowledge, that he hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor according to the full desert of our iniquities, Psal. ciii. 10. If we are in pain, we do not feel every kind of pain at once, yet we can give no sufficient reason why we should not. If we are exercised with poverty and losses, yet something worth the keeping, and more than we can justly claim, is still left to us, at least our lives are spared, though forfeited by sin. If we are in distress of soul, tossed with tempest and not comforted, we are not quite out of the reach of hope. Even if sickness, pain, loss, and despair, should all overtake us in the same moment, all is still less than we deserve. Our proper desert is hell, an exclusion from God, and confinement with Satan and his angels, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. Every thing short of this is a mercy. But Jesus, though he had no sin of his own, bore the sins of many. His sufferings were indeed temporary, limited in their duration, but otherwise extreme. Witness the effects: his heaviness unto death, his consternation, his bloody sweat, his eclipse upon the cross, when deprived of that presence, which was his only, and his exceeding joy. On these accounts, no sorrow was like unto his sorrow!

The unknown sorrows of the Redeemer are a continual source of support and consolation to his believing people. In his sufferings they contemplate his atonement, his love, and his example, and they are animated by the bright and glorious issue. For he passed from death to life, from suffering to glory.

(1.) His atonement, apprehended by faith, delivers them from guilt and condemnation, gives them peace with God, and access to him with liberty as children, Rom. v. 1, 2. Being thus delivered from their heavy burden, and from the power of Satan, and having a way open for receiving supplies of strength, according to their day, they are prepared to take up their cross, and to follow him.

(2.) His love, in submitting to such sorrows for their sakes, attaches their hearts to him. Great is the power of love! It makes hard things easy, and bitter sweet. Some of us can tell, or rather we cannot easily tell, how much we would cheerfully do, or bear, or forbear, for the sake of the person whom we dearly love. But this noblest principle of the soul never can exert itself with its full strength, till it is supremely fixed upon its proper object. The love of Christ has a constraining force indeed! 2 Cor. v. 14. It is stronger than death. It overcomes the world. And we thus love him because he first loved us; because he loved us and gave himself for us, 1 John iv. 19; Gal. ii. 20.

(3.) His example. The thought that he suffered for them, arms them with the like mind. They look to him and are enlightened. By his cross they are crucified to the world, and the world to them. They no longer court its favour, nor are afraid of its frown. They know what they must expect, if they will be his servants, by the treatment he met with; and they are content. He who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself for them, is worthy that they should suffer likewise for him. It is their desire, neither to provoke the opposition of men nor to dread it. They commit themselves to him, and are sure that he will not expose them to such sufferings as he endured for them. So, likewise, under all the trials and afflictions which they endure more immediately from the hand of the Lord, a lively thought of his sorrows reconciles them to their own. Thus by his stripes they are healed, and are comforted by having fellowship with him in his sufferings.

(4.) Lastly, if more were necessary, (and, sometimes, through remaining infirmity and surrounding temptation, every consideration is no more than necessary,) they know that their Lord passed through sufferings to glory. And they know (for they have his own gracious promise) that if they suffer with him, they shall also reign with him, John xii. 26; Rom. viii. 18. They are sure that the sufferings of the present life are not worthy to be compared with the joy which will then be revealed; and that when Christ, who is their life, shall appear, they also shall appear with

him in glory; (Col. iii. 4;) and therefore they are comforted in all their tribulation, and can say, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy," Acts xx. 24.

SERMON XXIV.

MESSIAH'S INNOCENCE VINDICATED.

He was taken from prison and from judgment; and who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.—Isaiah liii. 8.

LET not plain christians be stumbled, because there are difficulties in the prophetical parts of the scripture, and because translators and expositors sometimes explain them with some difference as to the sense. Whatever directly relates to our faith, practice, and comfort, may be plainly collected from innumerable passages, in which all the versions, and all sober expositors, are agreed. That there are some differences, will not appear strange, if we consider the antiquity of the Hebrew language, and that the Old Testament is the only book extant that was written during the time that it was the common language of the people. For this reason we meet with many words which occur but once; and others, which do not occur frequently, are evidently used in more than one sense. If we suppose that a time should come when the English language should be no longer spoken, and no more than a single volume in it be preserved, we may well conceive that posterity might differ as to the sense of many expressions, notwithstanding the assistances they might obtain by comparing the English with the French, Dutch, and other languages, which were in use at the same period. Such assistance we derive from the Chaldee, Syriac, Greek, and other ancient versions of the Old Testament, sufficient to confirm us in the true sense of the whole, and to throw light upon many passages otherwise dark and dubious; and yet there will remain a number of places, the sense of which the best critics have not been able to fix with certainty. Farther, the prophecies are usually expressed in the style of poetry, which, in all languages, is remote from the common forms of speaking. The grand evidence, to a humble mind, that the holy scripture was originally given by inspiration of God, and that the version of it which by his good providence we are favoured with is authentic, is the effect it has upon the heart and conscience when enlightened by the Holy Spirit. And without this internal, experimental evidence, the learned are no less at a loss than the vulgar.

An acquaintance with the Hebrew will perhaps suggest a meaning in this verse (the latter part only of which is taken into the Messiah) which may not readily occur to an English reader. But the purport of it is plainly expressed in many other passages. The text is not merely a repetition of what was spoken before concerning the Redeemer's sufferings; rather the declaration of what was to follow them begins here. It is the opening of a bright and glorious subject. He was taken, he was taken up, like Enoch and Elijah, from prison, and from judgment, and who can declare his generation? or (as the word properly signifies) his age? Who can declare his state, the establishment and duration of his dignity, influence, and government? For though he was cut off, made an excision and a curse, from amongst men, it was not upon his own account, but for the transgression of my people, that he was smitten.

God was manifested in the flesh, (1 Tim. iii. 16,) and in the flesh he suffered as a malefactor. Undoubtedly the divine nature is incapable of suffering; but the human nature, which did suffer, was assumed by him who is over all, God blessed for ever, Rom. ix. 5. But he was justified in the Spirit, and sufficient care was taken, that in his lowest humiliation, though he was condemned and reviled, his character should be vindicated. I shall therefore consider at present the testimonies given to his innocence. Though he was cut off from the land of the living, it was only as a substitute for others. He was stricken for the transgressions of his people.

1. The first attention, and which of itself is fully sufficient to establish this point, is that of Judas. He was one of the twelve apostles who attended our Lord's person, and who were admitted to a nearer and more frequent intercourse with him than the rest of his disciples. Though our Lord knew that his heart was corrupt, and that he would prove a traitor, he does not appear to have treated him with peculiar reserve, or to have kept him more at a distance than the other apostles; for when he told them, "One of you shall betray me," they had no particular suspicion of Judas. He therefore was well acquainted with the more retired hours of his Master's life. He had been often with him in Gethsemane before he went thither to betray him to his enemies. When he had acted this treacherous part, if he, who had been frequently present when Jesus conversed most freely in private with his select followers, had known any thing amiss in his conduct, we may be sure he would gladly have disclosed it, for his own justification. Christian societies have usually been reviled and slandered by those who have apostatized from them; their mistakes, if they were justly chargeable with any, have been eagerly published and aggravated, and many things often laid to their charge which they knew not. But Ju-

das, on the contrary, was compelled by his conscience, to return his ill-gotten gain to the chief priests and elders, and to confess, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood," Matt. xxvii. 4. Considering the time of making this declaration, when he saw that he was already condemned, and the persons to whom he made it, even to those who had condemned him, it cannot be denied that he was an unsuspected and competent witness to his innocence. And the answer of the chief priests implied, that, though their malice could be satisfied with nothing less than the death of this innocent person, they were unable to contradict the traitor's testimony.

2. Though Pilate likewise condemned Messiah to death, to gratify the importunity of the Jews, he repeatedly declared his firm persuasion of his innocence; and he did it with great solemnity. "He took water and washed his hands (publicly) before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person," Matt. xxvii. 24. He laboured for his release, though the fear of man prevailed upon him at last, as it has upon many, to act in defiance of the light and conviction of his conscience. And from him we learn, that Herod, (Luke xxiii. 15,) notwithstanding he mocked him and set him at nought, considered the accusations of his enemies to be entirely groundless. And farther, when the Jews proposed such an alteration of the title affixed to his cross, as might imply that the claims our Lord had made were unjust and criminal, Pilate utterly refused to comply with their demand.

3. The thief upon the cross, with his dying breath, said, "This man hath done nothing amiss." If his competency as a witness should be disputed, because it is probable he had known but little of him, I admit the objection. Be it so, that this malefactor had little personal knowledge of our Lord. Then his opinion of his innocence must have been founded upon public report; and, therefore, it seems, he spoke not for himself only; but his words may be taken as a proof, that the people at large, though they suffered themselves to be influenced by the chief priests, to demand his death, and to prefer Barabbas, a robber and a murderer, to him, were generally conscious that he had done nothing amiss. Many of those who now said, "Crucify him, Crucify him," had, not long before, welcomed him with acclamations of praise, saying, "Hosannah to the son of David." This inconsistence and inconstancy is not altogether surprising to those who are well acquainted with the weakness and wickedness of human nature in its present state; and who consider the effects which the misrepresentations and artifice of persons of great name, and in high office, have often produced in the minds of the ignorant and superstitious. Thus, at Lystra, through the persuasion of the Jews, the apostle Paul was stoned and left for dead, (Acts xiv. 12, 19,) by the very people, who, a little before, could with difficulty be restrained from paying him divine honours.

4. Though the salvation of men, and the honour of the law of God required, that when Messiah undertook to make an atonement for our sins, he should be thus given up to the rage and cruelty of his enemies, suffer all the infamy due to the worst and vilest transgressors, and be deserted by God and man; yet his heavenly Father bore a signal and solemn testimony to his character. The frame of nature sympathized with her suffering Lord. The heavens were clothed with sackcloth; the sun withdrew his shining; the sanctuary was laid open by the rending of the vail of the temple from the top to the bottom; the earth trembled greatly; the rocks were rent; the graves opened, and the dead arose. These events, in connexion with what had passed before, extorted an acknowledgment of his innocence from the Roman centurion who was appointed to attend his execution.

Thus, it appears, that Judas, who betrayed him; the Jewish council, which could not find sufficient ground, even though they employed false and suborned witnesses to pass sentence upon him; Herod, who derided him; Pilate, who condemned him; the malefactor, who suffered with him; and the commander of the soldiers who crucified him, all combined in a declaration of his innocence: God himself confirming their word, by signs and wonders in heaven and upon earth.

It may seem quite unnecessary to prove the innocency of him, who, in his human nature, was absolutely perfect, and in whom the presence and fulness of God dwelt; and it is indeed unnecessary to those who believe in his name. It is, however, a pleasing contemplation to them, and has an important influence upon their faith and hope. In this they triumph, that he who knew no sin himself, was made sin, was treated as a sinner for them, that they might be made the righteousness of God in him. The High Priest of our profession needed not, as those who typified his office of old, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people; for he was perfectly holy, harmless, and undefiled. And had he not been a lamb without spot or blemish, he could not have been accepted on our behalf. It was the perfection of his voluntary obedience to the law of our nature, under which he submitted to be made, which, conjoined with the excellency of his character as the Son of God, made him meet, able, and worthy, to expiate our transgressions. By the one offering of himself, once offered, he has made an end of sin, brought in an everlasting righteousness, and having appeared with his own blood within the vail, in the presence of God for us, and ever living

to make intercession for all who come unto God by him, he is proposed in the gospel as the author of eternal salvation to all who obey him. In him, all the seed of Israel shall be justified, and shall glory, Is. xli. 17, 25. In him the true Israel, the partakers of the faith of Abraham, shall be saved, saved to the uttermost, saved with an everlasting salvation; they shall not be ashamed, nor confounded, world without end.

But who that knows these things can sufficiently commiserate the fatal effects of that unbelief which blinds and hardens the hearts of multitudes! especially that more learned and informed, and therefore more inexcusable unbelief, which characterizes the modern patrons of scepticism. They read and admire ancient history. There is no old story so frivolous or improbable, but it is sufficient to engage their attention, and to exercise their acumen, if it be found in Herodotus or Livy. They spare no pains, they perplex themselves, and weary their readers with their attempts to decypher an ancient inscription, or to fix the date, or reconcile the circumstances of a supposed event, which, after all, perhaps never had place but in the imagination of the writer. Their implicit deference to such uncertain authorities as these, often verges upon the border of extreme credulity. The Bible is an ancient history likewise; and if it was only received upon the footing of the rest, as merely a human composition, the facts which it relates, and the manner in which they are related, the admirable simplicity of narration in some parts, the unrivalled sublimity of description in others; the justness and discrimination of characters; the views it unfolds of the workings of the human heart, and the springs of action, so exactly conformable to experience and observation, might surely recommend it to their notice. And possibly, if it did claim no higher authority than a human composition, men who have any just pretensions to taste, would admire it no less than they now undervalue it. But because it does not flatter their pride, nor give indulgence to their corrupt propensities, they are afraid to study it, lest the internal marks of its divine original should force unwelcome convictions upon their minds. Therefore they remain willingly ignorant of its contents, or the knowledge they discover of it is so very superficial, that a well instructed child of ten years of age may smile at the mistakes of critics and philosophers. That such a book is extant, is undeniable. How can they account for its production? A view of what they actually have done, will warrant us to assert, that the wisest men of antiquity, neither would have written such a book if they could, nor were they able, had they been ever so willing. And yet we have as good evidence, that the New Testament was written by plain and unlearned men, as we have for any fact recorded in history. How could such men invent such a book? and how should they without seeming directly to design it, but incidently as it were, represent, that persons of such various characters, who concurred in putting Jesus to death, should all equally concur in establishing the testimony of his innocence.

True christians, when they suffer unjustly, may learn, from the example of their Lord, to suffer patiently. The apostle presses this argument upon servants, (1 Pet. ii. 18, 20,) who in those days were chiefly bond servants, or slaves. He, therefore, evidently supposes, that the knowledge of the gospel was sufficient to qualify people in the lowest situations of human life, with a fortitude and magnanimity of spirit of which philosophy could scarcely reach the conception. In effect, to be much taken up with the interests of self, to live upon the breath of others, to be full of resentment for every injury, and watchful to retaliate it; these are the properties and tokens of a little and narrow mind. It requires no energy, no sacrifice, no resolution, to acquire such a disposition; for it is natural to us, and powerful and habitual in the weakest and least respectable characters. But to act uniformly as the servants of God, satisfied with his approbation, under the regulation of his will, and for his sake cheerfully to bear whatever hardships a compliance with duty may expose us to, enduring grief, suffering wrongfully, and acting in the spirit of benevolence and meekness, not only to the good, but also to the froward; this indicates a true nobleness of soul. And to this we are called by our profession: for thus Christ suffered. He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; yet he was reviled, but he reviled not again. He suffered, though innocent; but he threatened not. He was crucified by wicked men: but he prayed for them while they were nailing him to the cross. This was an eminent branch of the mind that was in Christ; and it ought to be a distinguishing feature in the character of his people. For, is the disciple above his Lord? or should the conduct of the disciple contradict that of his Lord? Undoubtedly, so far as we are partakers in the doctrine of his sufferings, and have real fellowship with him in his death, we shall resemble him. If we say we abide in him, we ought to walk, even as he walked, 1 John ii. 6. But they, who, calling themselves Christians, are full of the spirit of self-justification, contention, and complaint, while they profess to believe in him, deny him by their works. The apostles Peter and John, deeply affected by their obligations to him, and by the exquisite pattern of meekness and tenderness which he had set before them, departed from the presence of the council, not swelling with anger, nor hanging down their heads with

grief, but rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his sake, Acts v. 41. And he deserves no less from us than he did from them. It was for us, no less than for them, that he endured reproach, and was content to die as a malefactor, though he was innocent.

SERMON XXV.

MESSIAH RISING FROM THE DEAD.

For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption.—Psalm xvi. 10.

THAT the gospel is a divine revelation, may be summarily proved from the character of its Author. If an infidel was so far divested of prejudice and prepossession, as to read the history of Jesus Christ recorded by the evangelists, with attention, and in order to form his judgment of it, simply and candidly, as evidence should appear, I think he must observe many particulars in his spirit and conduct, so very different from the prevailing sentiments of mankind, as to convince him, that man, in his present state, could not possibly have conceived the idea of such a character. Poets and historians have often employed their powers in delineating what appeared to them the great and the excellent in human conduct. But how different are the pictures of their admired heroes, sages, and legislators, from the portrait of the Saviour, as it is drawn with the utmost simplicity by plain unlettered men, who, without art or affectation, only describe what they profess to have seen and heard. I fix at present upon a single consideration, which perhaps cannot be expressed more properly or forcibly, than in the words of an ingenious writer* now living. "He is the only founder of a religion, in the history of mankind, which is totally unconnected with all human policy and government, and therefore totally unconducive to any worldly purpose whatever. All others, Mahomet, Numa, and even Moses himself, blended their religious institutions with their civil, and by them obtained dominion over their respective people. But Christ neither aimed at, nor would accept of, any such power. He rejected (John xviii. 36) every object which all other men pursue, and made choice of those which others fly from and are afraid of. He refused power, riches, honours, and pleasure; and courted poverty, ignominy, tortures, and death. Many have been the enthusiasts and impostors, who have endeavoured to impose on the world pretended revelations; and some of them, from pride, obstinacy, or principle, have gone so far as to lay down their lives rather than retract: but I defy history to show one, who ever made his own sufferings and death (John xii. 24, 32, 33) a necessary part of his original plan, and essential to his mission. This Christ actually did; he foresaw, foretold, declared their necessity, and voluntarily endured them.

The death of our Lord was indeed essential to his plan; as such, it was constantly in his view, and he often spoke of it. Probably it was the whole of his enemies' plan; and when they saw him dead, buried, and the sepulchre sealed, they triumphed in their success, and expected to hear of him no more. But the scriptures, which were read in their synagogues every sabbath-day, foretold his resurrection from the dead. The text before us, if there were no other, is a sufficient proof of this, to those who acknowledge the authority of the New Testament, since it is expressly applied to him by the apostles Peter and Paul.

The word in the Hebrew text rendered, in our version, *soul*, is used in different senses. According to the connexion in which it stands, it signifies breath, life, soul, or spirit, and sometimes the dead body. The corresponding Greek word, where the apostle quotes this verse, (Acts ii. 27,) has likewise various significations. And the original words answering to hell, signify both the invisible world, or the state of the dead, and sometimes the grave. Notwithstanding this seeming diversity, we are at no loss here for the precise sense. Scripture is the best interpreter of itself. It is evidently the apostle's design to prove that the psalmist foresaw, and foretold, the resurrection of that body which was taken down dead from the cross, and laid in Joseph's tomb. With this body our Lord arose on the third day, according to the scriptures.

Though Messiah was, for our sakes, treated as a malefactor, all who were immediately concerned in his death were constrained (as we have seen) to declare his innocence. But he was worthy of a more solemn and authoritative justification. Accordingly, "He was declared to be the Son of God, with power, by his resurrection from the dead," Rom. i. 4.

The apostle expounds "thine Holy One" by the word *flesh*, Acts ii. 29. The human nature, the body formed by the immediate power of God, and born of a virgin, was holy.—It was a "holy thing;" (Luke i. 35;) perfect and pure, and therefore naturally not mortal, though subject to death for us. In this nature the son of God was charged with sins not his own; he became willingly responsible for many, Matt. xx. 28. Whatever was necessary on the behalf of sinners, to render their forgiveness consistent with the honour of the law, justice, truth, and go-

* Jenyn's Internal Evidence of the Christian Religion, p. 33, 34. edit. 3.

vernment of God, was exacted of him, and he performed, and paid to the utmost. He made a full atonement for sin; and though he had power over his life, he hung hour after hour in agonies upon the cross, till he said, "It is finished." Then he resigned his spirit into the hands of his heavenly Father. He was afterwards buried. But having finished his whole undertaking, destroyed death, and him that had the power of it, and opened the way to the kingdom of heaven, in favour of all who should believe in him, it was not possible that he should be detained in the grave, Acts ii. 24. He had power likewise to resume the life he had laid down for his sheep; and he arose the third day, to exercise all power and authority in heaven and in earth.

His resurrection, therefore, is the grand principal fact upon which the truth and importance of christianity rests. For though Christ died, if he had not risen again, your faith and our preaching would be in vain. We should be yet in our sins, 1 Cor. xv. 17. And though it was not necessary that his resurrection should have been so publicly known, at the time, as his crucifixion, the evidence for it is strong and decisive. No one point of ancient history is capable of such clear accumulated proof. The apostles frequently saw him, conversed with him, ate and drank with him, and were assured that it was he by many infallible proofs. They could not be deceived themselves, nor could they have any temptation to deceive others. They declared his resurrection to the very people who put him to death; and they confirmed it by many indisputable miracles, which they performed in his name. They persevered in this testimony, in defiance of the malice of the Jews and the scorn of the Heathens. And by this doctrine of a crucified risen Saviour, though unsupported by the patronage of human power, yea, though opposed by it in every place, they effected that change in the moral world, wherever they went, which the philosophers had not been able to produce, by all their instructions, in a single instance; turning men, whom they found under the strongest prejudices of education and habit, from darkness to light, and from the worship of dumb idols, to serve the living and the true God, 1 Thes. i. 9.

But there are proofs of this point which depend not upon arguments or history; which require neither learning, genius, nor study to comprehend; but are equally adapted to persons of all capacities, and in all circumstances. These are the effects which this doctrine produces on the hearts of those who truly receive it upon the authority of scripture, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to open the eyes of the mind, to take of the things of Jesus, (what the scripture reveals of his person, offices, and glory,) and to present them, with infallible light and evidence, to those who humbly yield themselves to his teaching. These are made partakers of the power of his resurrection, Phil. iii. 10. It delivers them from guilt and fear, animates them with confidence towards God, weans them from the love and spirit of this evil world, inspires them with great and glorious hopes, and delivers them from the fear of death. They are risen with Christ, by faith, and seek the things which are above, (Col. iii. 1,) where they know their Lord and Saviour is seated in glory.

I do but touch upon these particulars at present, because the subject will come under our consideration again, from a subsequent passage in the Oratorio. Yet I would not wholly omit leading your reflections to them, though what I briefly offer now, may make what I shall then offer (if my life is prolonged to proceed so far) appear under the disadvantage of a repetition of the same thoughts. Indeed, I know not how to place the proof of this capital doctrine in a light entirely new. The most satisfactory proofs are the most obvious; and it would be folly to substitute weaker in their place for the sake of novelty. But if I should live to resume the subject, some of you who are now present may not live to hear me. So far as concerns the fact, I may hope that the most, or all of you, are believers, and that you are already persuaded in your minds that the Lord is risen indeed! Luke xxiv. 34. I am not preaching to Jews or Mahometans, but to professed christians. But permit me to ask, What influence this truth has upon your hopes, your tempers, and your conduct? The powers of darkness know that Christ is risen. They believe, they feel, they tremble. I hope none of you will be content with such a faith as may be found in the fallen angels. As surely as he is risen, he will at length return to judge the world. "Behold he cometh in the clouds, and every eye shall see him!" They who are prepared to meet him, who are waiting for him, and who long for his appearance, have reason to rejoice that he once died, and rose again.

Many are the advantages which true christians derive from a spiritual and enlightened knowledge of this doctrine. I will mention a few.

1. As Messiah was delivered, that is delivered up, as a hostage to the demands of justice for our offences; so they know that he was raised again for our justification, Rom. v. 25. By virtue of that union which subsists between Messiah, as the head of his body the church, and all his members; that is, all in the successive ages of the world, who believe in him by a faith of divine operation; he is their legal representative; he and they are considered as one. His sufferings, his whole humiliation and obedience unto death, is so imputed to them, that they thereby are exempted from condemnation;

and though not from all sufferings, yet from all that is properly penal, or strictly a punishment. What they suffer is only in a way of discipline or chastisement; and to them a token, not of wrath, but of love. On the other hand, as he by his resurreetion was vindieated, justified from the reproaches of his enemies, declared to be the Son of God, with power, and raised to glory; they have fellowship with him herein. God exalted him to glory, and gave him a name above every name, that their faith and hope might be in God, 1 Pet. i. 21. They are not only pardoned, but aceepted in the Beloved. And after this state of discipline is ended, they shall be treated as if they had never sinned. For if their sins are sought for in that day, they shall not be found. If any eharge should be brought against them, it shall be overruled—by this eomprehensive unanswerable plea—Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, appears in the presence of God, acknowledges them as his own, and makes intereession for them, Rom. viii. 33, 34. Among men, a eriminal may obtain a pardon, may eseape the sentenee he has deserved, and yet be left in a destitute and miserable condition. But justifieation is God's manner of pardoning sinners, aeeording to the sovereignty and riehes of his graee, in the Son of his love. Those whom he pardons, he also justifies; and whom he justifies, he also glorifies. And even now in this life, though it doth not yet appear what they shall be, though their present privileges are far short of what they hope for, and though eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath prepared for them, (1 Cor. ii. 9,) yet even now are they the children of God, 1 John iii. 2. And in the midst of their trials and infirmities, though eonscious of mueh defect, and many defilements, in their best hours and services; and though they have not forgotten their iniquities and provoeations, when they lived without God in the world; yet, according to the measure of their faith, exercised upon their Saviour, who was raised for their justification, they ean rejoice in the knowledge of their acceptanee, and rely upon him for their perseverance; and they dare approach the great, holy, and heart-searching God, as to a Father, and pour out their hearts before him, with greater freedom than they can use to their dearest earthly friends. And while they feel and confess themselves unworthy of the smallest of his mercies, they are not afraid to ask for the greatest blessings his bounty ean bestow, even to be set as a seal upon his heart, and upon his arm, to be filled with all his communicable fulness, and to elaim him as their everlasting portion.

2. The resurreetion of Christ from the dead is a pledge and speeimen of that almighty power which is engaged on their bĕhalf, to overeome all the obstacles, difficulties, and enemies they are liable to meet with in their pilgrimage, which threaten to disappoint their hopes, and to prevent them from obtaining their heavenly inheritance. The first communication of a principle of faith and spiritual life to their hearts, whereby they are delivered from the dominion of sin, and from the spirit and love of the world, is attributed to the exceeding greatness of that mighty power (Eph. i. 19—21) which raised the dead body of the Lord from the grave, and set him at his own right hand, far above all principality and might, and every name that is named. And often the ehureh, collectively, in its militant state, and the individuals which compose it, in their personal eoncerns, have been brought, to outward appearanee, exceeding low. Their enemies have seemed upon the point of triumphing, and saying, Down with them, even to the ground. Such was the boast of the Jewish rulers, when they had slain the Shepherd and dispersed his flock. But it was a short-lived boast. He arose, he aseended, he took possession of his kingdom for himself and for them. He poured out his Holy Spirit upon them, and they went forth preaching his word, which spread like the light of advaneing day, from Judea to Samaria, and to the distant parts of the earth. The united force of the powers of hell and earth endeavoured to suppress it, but in vain. Many nations and kingdoms laboured to extirpate the very name of christianity from among men, but they sueeessively perished in the attempt; and the cause against which they raged is still preserved. It is founded upon a rock, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it, Matt. xvi. 18. Nor can any weapon prosper that is formed against the weakest and meanest of those who sincerely espouse this cause. He to whom they have devoted and entrusted themselves, has promised that none shall pluck them out of his hands, John x. 28. And while he remains faithful to his word, and able to fulfil it, they shall be safe. Yet they are often pressed above measure, beyond strength, insomuch that they perhaps despair even of life. But when they are at the lowest, the Lord is their helper; and they are taught by the exigencies they pass through, to trust, not in themselves, but in God who raiseth the dead, 2 Cor. i. 9. It is indeed, the Lord's usual method of training up his people to an habitual dependence upon himself. When he has raised their expectations by his promises, he permits, as it were, a temporary death to overcloud their prospect; and that which he has said he will surely do for them, appears for a season, to the judgment of sense, impracticable and hopeless. We might illustrate this point at large from the history of Abraham, of Israel in Egypt, of David, and

of the rebuilding of the second temple; and I doubt not but it might be illustrated from the history of many in this assembly. If you have been walking with God for any considerable time, you have met with turns and changes which have almost put you to a stand. You have been, and perhaps now are, in such circumstances, that you feel you have no resource in yourself, and you are sure that the help of man cannot relieve you; but while your help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth, (Psal. cxxiv. 8,) and while you are warranted to trust in him who raiseth the dead, you have no just reason to despond. It was a dark season with the disciples, when their Lord, whom they loved, and in whom they trusted, that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel, (Luke xxiv. 20, 21,) was condemned, and put to death. But the appointed third day relieved their fears, and turned their mourning into joy.

3. His resurrection is the pledge and pattern of ours. As certainly as Christ, the first-fruits is risen, so certainly shall they that are Christ's arise at his coming. And each of his people shall arise *aliusque et idem*.* Their bodies, though properly their own, shall be changed, and fashioned like unto his glorious body, Phil. iii. 21. This corruptible must put on incorruption; and the body, which is sown in dishonour and weakness, be raised in power and glory. Flesh and blood, in its present state, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. The body, in this life, is a clog and a burden to those who place their chief happiness in the service of God, and in communion with him. It is a vile body, defiled by sin, and it defiles their best desires and noblest efforts. Even the grace of the Holy Spirit, by which they live, though perfectly pure in itself, is debased, when communicated to them, and exercised under the disadvantages of a sinful nature, as the best wine will receive a taint if poured into a foul vessel. The body, in another view, is a prison, in which the soul, confined and pent up, is limited in its operations, and impeded in its perceptions of divine things. Though we are probably surrounded by the glorious realities of the spiritual world, only short and transient glances of them are discoverable by us; we see but by reflection, and darkly; (1 Cor. xiii. 12;) we know but in part, and should know nothing of them, but for the good report of the word of God. Farther, the body, as it is the seat of innumerable infirmities, and the medium which connects us with the calamities incident to this mortal state, is often a great hindrance to our most desirable enjoyments. Pain and sickness call off the attention, and indispose our faculties, when we wish to be most engaged in prayer, detain us from the ordinances, or prevent the pleasure we hope for in waiting upon the Lord in them. But our new, spiritual, and glorified bodies will be free from all defilement or defect. They will be completely qualified to answer the best wishes, and most enlarged activity of the soul. Then, but not till then, we hope to be all eye, all ear, always upon the wing in his service, and perfectly conformed to his image, in light, holiness, and love; for then we shall see him as he is, without any interposing veil or cloud, 1 John iii. 2.

* Another and yet the same.

SERMON XXVI.

THE ASCENSION OF MESSIAH TO GLORY.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of Hosts, he is the King of glory.—Psalm xxiv. 7—10.

THE institutions of the Levitical law were a shadow or sketch of good things to come. They exhibited a faint and general outline of the mediation and glory of Messiah. They may be compared to the delicate engravings on a seal, the beauty and proportions of which cannot be plainly discerned without the assistance of a glass. The gospel answers to such a glass. Beheld through this medium, the miniature delineations of the law, which to the eye of unassisted, unhumbled reason, appear confused and insignificant, display a precision of arrangement in the parts, and an importance of design in the whole, worthy of the wisdom of their great Author.

From the similarity of the subject of this psalm and the sixty-eighth, it is at least probable that they were both composed upon the same occasion, the removal of the ark of the Lord from its last stationary residence to its fixed abode in Zion, when the king, the priests, the singers, and the harpers, all assisted in the procession, attended by a great concourse of the people. The language of the latter part of the psalm is evidently alternate. And we may conceive, that when the ark approached the tabernacle, the priests and Levites who accompanied it, demanded admittance for it in these words, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates," &c. and were answered by those who were waiting within to receive it, "Who is the King of glory?" To which question the proper reply is made, "The Lord of Hosts, he is the King of glory."

This, if taken according to the letter of the history, was a grand and solemn transac-

tion. But it was at the same time a type of an event unspeakably more glorious. They who know that the scriptures of the Old Testament testify of Christ, that it is he of whom Moses in the Law, David in the Psalms, and all the succeeding prophets, did write, will, I think, agree in considering this passage as referring to his ascension, in the nature in which he suffered, into the true holy place in the heavens, as the representative and high-priest of his people; when, after having by his own self purged our sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Then having spoiled principalities and powers, he triumphed over them openly, though not in the view of mortal eyes. He lifted up his hands, and blessed his apostles, and while in this attitude he was parted from them, Luke xxiv. 51. He ascended gently and gradually, and they, admiring and adoring, beheld him with fixed attention, till a cloud concealed him from their sight, Acts i. 9. The pomp and triumph of his ascension were displayed in the invisible world. But this description, accommodated to our apprehensions, is given to assist the faith of his people, that their hearts may be comforted, their meditations enlarged, and that in the exercise of grateful love, they may follow him in their thoughts, ascend with him into the heavenly places, and rejoice in his glory.

We conceive of him, therefore, from this sublime passage, as ascending to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God, accompanied with a train of worshipping angels, who demand admittance for Messiah, the Saviour and friend of sinners, as the King of glory. The question is asked, Who is he that claims this honour? An answer is given, asserting his character, his victories, and the justice of his claims—"The Lord of Hosts, the Lord strong in battle, he is the King of glory."

The principal points which offer to our consideration are,

I. His title,—The Lord of hosts.

II. His victories, implied in the expression, —The Lord strong and mighty in battle.

III. His mediatorial title,—The King of glory.

IV. His authoritative entrance into the holy place.

I. Messiah, who humbled himself to the death of the cross, is the Lord of hosts. He is so, if the scripture be true; I attempt no other proof. This is a point not referred to the discussion of our fallen reason, but proposed by the authority of God in his word, as the foundation of our faith and hope. He is the husband of the church, and the husband of the church is the Lord of hosts, Isa. liv. 5.

It was the Lord of hosts, whom Isaiah saw, seated upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filling the temple, Isa. vi. 1. The vision filled him with astonishment, and he cried out, "Woe is me, I am undone;—for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." But the apostle John assures us, that when Isaiah said these things, he saw his glory, and spake of him, John xii. 41. This is the title of God in the Old Testament; or, as some choose to speak, of the Supreme Being. And it is ascribed to Messiah in many places. Therefore, if he were not the Lord of hosts, the scripture would be chargeable with authorizing, yea with enjoining idolatry But he is the true God, and eternal life; (1 John v. 20;) and they who give him the honour due to his name, have every thing to hope and nothing to fear.

II. He is the Lord strong and mighty in battle. It was in his human nature he engaged in battle with his enemies and ours. But the battle was the Lord's. Therefore, though he trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him, (Isaiah lxiii. 3,) his own arm brought him salvation. He is conqueror of sin, Satan, and death. We were under the power of these; therefore, for our sakes, he engaged in conflict with their united force. He fought, he bled, he died; but in dying, he conquered. The strength of sin is the law; this strength, he subdued, by obeying the precepts of the law, and sustaining the penalty due to our transgressions. He destroyed death, and disarmed it of its sting. He destroyed him that hath the power of death, Satan. He shook, he overturned the foundations of his kingdom, broke open his prison-doors, released his prisoners, delivered the prey out of the hand of the mighty, and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it, that is, in his cross, Col. ii. 15. The apostle alludes to the manner of a Roman triumph, in which the conqueror was drawn in a chariot of state, attended by his officers and soldiers; the principal prisoners followed in chains, and all the treasures and trophies gained from the vanquished enemy were displayed to adorn the procession. Thus Messiah subdued the strength and policy of the powers of darkness, in the hour of his lowest humiliation, when he hung and expired upon the cross, and triumphed over them, gloriously leading captivity captive, when he ascended on high, Ps. lxviii. 18. Satan, though still an enemy to his church and cause, is despoiled of his dominion; his power is only permissive, and in his fiercest assaults he is limited by bounds which he cannot pass, by a chain which he cannot break; and all his attempts are controlled and over-ruled, to the furtherance of the cause which he would suppress, and to the good of the persons whom he would worry and destroy. They are made acquainted with his devices, furnished with armour sufficient to repel him, and they fight under encouragement of a sure promise, that

the God of peace will shortly and finally bruise Satan under their feet. As Messiah, their King, has conquered for them, so they, in due time, shall be made more than conquerors, by faith in his blood, and in the word of his testimony.

III. The title of King of glory, I understand as peculiarly applicable to him in the character of Mediator. The glory of his divine nature is essential to him. But in consequence of his obedience unto death, he obtained, in the human nature, a name that is above every name, Phil. ii. 9. He suffered as a man, yea, as a malefactor; there was no appearance of glory in that form of a servant which he assumed for our sakes. Though without sin, he was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, subject to poverty, disgrace, and death; but the same man who was crucified, dead, and buried, received glory and authority at his resurrection, and was highly exalted to the administration of all dominion and government. Perhaps the word *glory* is not easily defined. We conceive it as expressing brightness and splendour. The glory of Solomon was the combined effect of his wisdom, power, and riches; which distinguished him in his character, conduct, and appearance, from other men. The glory of the sun is his effulgence and influence. The word *glory*, when applied to the blessed God, seems to denote that manifestation of himself, by which his intelligent creatures are capable of knowing him; for in himself he is infinite, inaccessible, and incomprehensible, and dwelleth in that light which no man, which no creature, can approach unto, 1 Tim. vi. 16. Of this manifestation there are various degrees. His glory shines in the creation. Not only do the heavens declare it by their immensity, (Ps. xix. 1,) and furnish us with an idea of his unspeakable greatness, who has sent forth ten thousand worlds, to tell us that he resides above them all; but the smallest of his works, the grass and flowers of the field, and the insects which creep upon the ground, (Ps. civ. 24, 25,) bear an impression of his wisdom and goodness, an inimitable criterion of his wonder-working hand, which so far displays his glory. To an attentive and discerning mind, his glory shines in his providence; in his preserving the world which he has made; in supplying the various wants of his creatures, and particularly in his moral government of mankind. Here, besides his wisdom, power, and general goodness, we discover some traces of his character as the righteous Judge of the earth. But to our limited capacities and views this glory is obscured by many difficulties. Though righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne, yet clouds and darkness are round about him, Psalm xcvii. 2. By his holy word, his revealed will, we are favoured with a still brighter display of his glory, in the perfections of holiness, justice, truth, and mercy, which fallen man is unable clearly to discover in his works of creation and providence. But chiefly his Son is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, Heb. i. 3. No one hath seen God at any time, but the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, (John i. 18,) intimately acquainted with his counsels, he hath declared him. This was the great design of his advent, to make God known to man: for as it is life eternal to know the only true God, so he is only to be known in and by Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent, (John xvii. 3,) and who is the way and the door; and there is no entrance to the knowledge of God but by him. In the person and work of Messiah, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, the brightness and harmony of all his attributes, is transcendently revealed. In this sense he is the Lord, the King of glory. When we are enlightened by the Holy Spirit, to conceive of him according to the testimony given of him in the scripture, we see the glory of God. Other discoveries of it are but scattered rays and emanations of light; but in Jesus the glory of God resides in its source and fulness, as light in the sun. He is therefore the King of glory.

IV. As the acknowledged King of glory, in the nature of man, he ascended; the everlasting gates unfolded wide, and he entered into the holy place, not made with hands, there to appear in the presence of God for his people:

1. As their representative. The glory is properly his own, the benefit redounds to his people. Sin had excluded them from the kingdom; but he claimed and took possession in their name, Heb. vi. 20. Hence he is styled their forerunner, because by virtue of their relation to him, and their interest in him, they shall surely follow him. This is the encouragement of believers. He is the head of his body the church: and though the church, while in this world, is in a suffering perilous state; yet as the body of a man is not in danger of drowning while his head is out of the water, so our forerunner and head being in heaven on their behalf, he will assuredly draw all his living members to himself. He has said, "Because I live, ye shall shall live also," John xiv. 19. And he has stipulated for them, that they shall, each in his appointed time, be with him where he is, to behold his glory, John xvii. 24.

2. As their High-priest and Intercessor. He presents their persons and their prayers acceptable to God. He bears the iniquity of their holy things. With this encouragement, weak and unworthy as they are in themselves, and though their best services are polluted, they find a liberty of access; and because he ever liveth, thus to make inter-

cession for all who come unto God by him, (Heb. vii. 25,) they know that he is able to save them to the uttermost.

3. Though the heavens must receive and contain his holy human nature till the restitution of all things, he is not unmindful of them in their present circumstances. He is seated upon the throne of universal dominion, and he exercises his authority and rule with an especial view to their welfare. While he pleads for them on high, by the power of his Spirit, he is present with them below. He comforts their hearts, enlivens their assemblies, and manages their concerns. He is their Shepherd, who gives them food, controls their enemies, revives their fainting spirits, and restores their wanderings, Psalm xxiii. His ear is open to their prayers, his eye is upon them in every situation, and his arm stretched forth for their relief. Therefore, though persecuted, they are not forsaken; though cast down, they are not destroyed. And he has promised that he will not leave them, until he has done all that for them which his word has taught them to hope for; until he has made them victorious over all their enemies, and put the conqueror's song in their mouths, and a crown of life upon their heads.

This High and Holy One, this King of glory, who is seated on the throne of heaven, dwelleth also in the humble and lowly spirit. He thus solemnly claims the throne of the heart of each of his people, which, in a state of nature, is usurped by self and Satan; and he is thus willingly acknowledged and admitted in the day of his power. Behold! he stands at the door, and knocks; (Rev. iii. 20;) and because he is as yet unknown, he is for a while rejected. The bolts and bars of prejudice and unbelief withstand his entrance. But when he comes on a purpose of grace, he will take no denial. For a season he waits to be gracious. But he has an appointed hour, when he reveals his great name, and makes the soul sensible who he is! Then the gates of brass and bars of iron are broken before him. His greatness and his goodness, what he is in himself, and what he has done and suffered for sinners, are motives which cannot be resisted when they are truly understood. Satan, who, as the strong one armed, long laboured to hinder him from his rightful possession, is himself dispossessed. The soul laments its former obstinacy, throws down its arms, throws wide open its doors, and bids the King of glory welcome. Then old things pass away, and all things become new. Such was the change the poor man experienced, out of whom Jesus cast a legion of evil spirits. At first, if he could, he would have prevented his kind purpose; he was afraid of his deliverer, and said, "I beseech thee torment me not." Mark v. 7. How wretched was his state then, miserable in himself, and a terror to others! But what a wonderful and happy alteration, when he sat quietly at his Saviour's feet, clothed and in his right mind!

I close the subject with the apostle's inference, "Seeing then that we have so great a high-priest, who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." Heb. iv. 14. Let not those who know him, be ashamed of their attachment to him. You will not repent in a dying hour, that you once thought too highly of him, or expected too much from him, or devoted yourselves with too much earnestness to his service. Nor yield to unbelief and fear. Though your enemies are many and mighty, and your trials great, greater is he that is with you. If the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the Lord strong and mighty in battle, be for you, who can be against you, so as effectually to harm you? Continue instant in prayer, persevere in well-doing. Our ascended Lord will one day return; and then they who have loved and served, and trusted him here, shall appear with him in glory, Col. iii. 4.

Others, if they can, must prepare to meet him. But alas! how shall they stand before him? Or whither shall they flee from him whose presence filleth the heavens and the earth? Jer. xxiii. 24. Have they an arm like God? or can they thunder with a voice like his? As yet he is proclaimed by the gospel, a Saviour, seated upon a throne of grace, stretching forth the golden sceptre of his love, and inviting sinners to be reconciled. Now is the accepted time. Hereafter he will be seen upon a throne of judgment, to take vengeance of his enemies.

SERMON XXVII.

MESSIAH THE SON OF GOD.

For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?—Hebrews, i. 5.

THOUGH every part of a revelation from God must of course be equally true, there may be a considerable difference even among truths proposed by the same authority, with respect to their immediate importance. There are fundamental truths, the knowledge of which is essentially necessary to our peace and holiness: and there are others of a secondary nature, which, though very useful in their proper connexion, and though the right apprehension of them is greatly conducive to the comfort and establishment of a believer, are not so necessary, but that he may be a true believer before he clearly understands them. Thus our Lord pronounced Peter blessed, (Matt. xvi. 17,) for his acknowledg-

ment of a truth, which had been revealed to him, not by flesh and blood, but from above, though he was at that time very deficient in doctrinal knowledge. It is not easy to draw the line here, and precisely to distinguish between fundamental and secondary truths; yet some attention to this distinction is expedient; and the want of such attention has greatly contributed to foment and embitter controversies in the Church of Christ; while fallible men, from a mistaken zeal for the faith once delivered to the saints, have laboured to enforce all their religious sentiments with an equal and indiscriminate vehemence. It is evident, that the truths essential to the very being of a Christian must be known and experienced by all, of every nation, people, and language, who are taught of God; (Is. liv. 13;) for they, and they only, are Christians indeed, who are thus taught. And therefore it seems to follow, that no doctrine, however true in itself, which humble and spiritual persons, who study the scriptures with prayer, and really depend upon divine teaching, are not agreed in, can be strictly fundamental. And perhaps the chief part of the apparent diversity of their sentiments does not so often respect the truth itself, as the different acceptation they put upon the words and phrases by which they endeavour to express their meaning to each other.

However, if there be any doctrine fundamental, and necessary to be rightly understood, what the scriptures teach concerning the person of Messiah the Redeemer, must be eminently so. Mistakes upon this point must necessarily be dangerous. It cannot be a question of mere speculation, whether the Saviour be God or a creature; he must either be the one or the other; and the whole frame of our religion is unavoidably dependent upon the judgment we form of him. If he be a man only, or if he be an angel, though of the highest order, and possessed of excellencies peculiar to himself; still, upon the supposition that he is but a creature, he must be infinitely inferior to his Maker, in comparison of whose immensity the difference between an angel and a worm is annihilated. Then all they who pay divine worship to Jesus, who love him above all, trust him with all their concerns for time and eternity, and address him in the language of Thomas, "My Lord, and my God," (John xx. 28,) are involved in the gross and heinous crime of idolatry, by ascribing to him that glory which the great God has declared he will not give to another, Is. xlii. 8. On the contrary, if he be God over all blessed for ever, Jehovah, the Lord of hosts, then they who refuse him the honour due unto his name, worship they know not what, John iv. 22. For there is but one God; and, according to this plan, they who know him not in Christ, know him not at all, but are without God in the world, Ephes. ii. 12. The judgment we form of the Saviour demonstrates likewise how far we know ourselves. For it may be fairly presumed, that they who think a creature capable of making atonement for their sins, or of sustaining the office of Shepherd and bishop of their souls, have too slight thoughts, both of the evil of sin, and of the weakness and wickedness of the human heart.

We ascribe it therefore to the wisdom and goodness of God, that a doctrine so important, the very pillar and ground of truth, is not asserted once, or in a few places of scripture only. It does not depend upon texts which require a nice skill in criticism, or a collation of ancient manuscripts, to settle their sense; but, like the blood in the animal economy, it pervades and enlivens the whole system of revelation. The books of Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets, all testify of Him, who was styled the Son of God in so peculiar a sense, that the apostle, in this passage, considers it as a sufficient proof that he is by nature superior to all creatures. The form of the question implies the strongest assertion of this superiority; as if he had said, Conceive of the highest and most exalted of the angels, it would be absurd to suppose that God would say to him, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee."

The verse contains three terms which require explanation, *My Son—Begotten—This day*. But who is sufficient for these things? If I attempt to explain them, I wish to speak with a caution and modesty becoming the sense I ought to have of my own weakness, and to keep upon safe ground; lest, instead of elucidating so sublime a subject, I should darken counsel by words without knowledge. And I know of no safe ground to go upon in these inquiries, but the sure testimony of scripture. It would be to the last degree improper to indulge flights of imagination, or a spirit of curiosity or conjecture upon this occasion. These are the deep things of God, in which, if we have not the guidance of his word and Spirit, we shall certainly bewilder ourselves. Nor would I speak in a positive dogmatizing strain; at the same time I trust the scripture will afford light sufficient to preserve us from a cold and comfortless uncertainty.

The gracious design of God in affording us his holy scripture, is to make us wise unto salvation, 2 Tim. iii. 15. His manner of teaching is therefore accommodated to our circumstances. He instructs us in heavenly things by earthly. And to engage our confidence, to excite our gratitude, to animate us to our duty by the most affecting motives; and that the reverence we owe to his great

and glorious Majesty, as our Creator and Legislator, may be combined with love and cheerful dependence, he is pleased to reveal himself by those names which express the nearest relation and endearment amongst ourselves. Thus he condescends to style himself the Father, the Husband, and the Friend of his people. But though in this way we are assisted in forming our conceptions of his love, compassion, and faithfulness, it is obvious that these names, when applied to him, must be understood in a sense agreeable to the perfections of his nature, and in many respects different from the meaning they bear amongst men. And thus, when we are informed that God has a Son, an only Son, an only begotten Son, it is our part to receive his testimony, to admire and adore; and for an explanation adapted to our profit and comfort, we are to consult, not our own preconceived ideas, but the further declarations of his word, comparing spiritual things with spiritual, attending with the simplicity of children to his instructions, and avoiding, as much as possible, those vain reasonings, upon points above our comprehension, which, though flattering to the pride of our hearts, are sure to indispose us for the reception of divine truth. A distinction in the divine nature, inconceivable by us, but plainly revealed in terms, must be admitted, upon the testimony and authority of him, who alone can instruct us in what we are concerned to know of his adorable essence. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one," 1 John v. 7. To each of these three the perfections of Deity are attributed and ascribed in various parts of scripture. Each of them therefore is God; and yet we are sure, both from scripture and reason, there is, there can be, but one God. Thus far we can go safely; and that we can go no farther, that our thoughts are lost and overwhelmed, if we attempt to represent to ourselves how or in what manner three are one, and one are three, may be easily accounted for, if any just reason can be given, why a worm cannot comprehend infinity. Let us first, if we can, account for the nature, essence, and properties of the things with which, as to their effects, we are familiarly acquainted. Let us explain the growth of a blade of grass, or the virtues of the loadstone. Till we are able to do this, it becomes us to lay our hands upon our mouths, and our mouths in the dust. Far from attempting to explain the doctrine of the Trinity to my hearers, I rather wish to leave an impression upon your minds, that it is to us (and perhaps to the highest created intelligence) incomprehensible. But if it be contained in the scripture (which I must leave to your own consciences to determine in the sight of God,) it is thereby sufficiently proved, and humble faith requires no other proof.

Allow me to confirm my own sentiments, by an observation of a celebrated French writer,* to the following purport:—"The whole difference, with respect to this subject, between the common people and the learned doctors, is—that while they are both equally ignorant, the ignorance of the people is modest and ingenuous, and they do not blush for being unable to see what God has thought fit to conceal. Whereas the ignorance of their teachers is proud and affected: they have recourse to scholastic distinctions, and abstract reasonings, that they may not be thought upon a level with the vulgar."

The form of baptism prescribed by our Lord for the use of his church, is thus expressed, "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," Matt. xxviii. 19. It is evident, by comparing this sentence with that which I before recited from the Epistle of John, that the Word and the Son are synonymous terms, expressive of the same character. They are both the titles of Messiah. Of him John spoke, when he said, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us;" and of him God the Father said, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." Had God spoken thus to an angel, it would have been in effect saying, Thou art the Word, which in the beginning was with God, and was God, by whom all things were made. But to which of all the angels would the great God use language like this?

Our Lord, in his conference with Nicodemus, was pleased to say, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," &c. John iii. 16. It was undoubtedly his design, by this expression, to give to Nicodemus, and to us, the highest idea possible of the love of God to sinners. He so loved the world, beyond description or comparison, that he gave his only begotten Son. Surely then the gift spoken of must not be limited to signify the human nature only. This was not all that he gave. The human nature was the medium of the acts and sufferings of Messiah: but he who assumed it was the Word, who was before all, and by whom all things were made. It is true the human nature was given, supernaturally formed by divine power, and born of a virgin. But he who was in the beginning, God with God, was given to appear, obey, and suffer, in the nature of man, for us, and for our salvation. And to him are ascribed the perfections and attributes of Deity; for which the highest angels are no more capable than the worms which creep upon the earth.

I cannot, therefore, suppose, that the title

* Abbadie.

of Son of God is merely a title of office, or belonging only to the nature which he assumed; but that Messiah is the Son of God, as he is God and man in one person. If the forming a perfect and spotless man, like Adam when he was first created, could have affected our salvation, it would have been a great and undeserved mercy to have vouchsafed the gift; but I think it would not have required such very strong language as the scripture uses in describing the gift of the Son of God. The God-man the whole person of Christ, was sent, came forth from the Father. The manhood was the offering; but the Word of God, possessed of the perfections of Deity, was the altar necessary to sanctify the gift, and to give a value and efficacy to the atonement.

The term *begotten*, expresses, with us, the ground of relation between father and son, and upon which an only son is the heir of a father. I feel and confess myself at a loss here. I might take up your time, and perhaps conceal my own ignorance, by borrowing from the writings of wiser and better men than myself, a detail of what have been generally reputed the more prevailing orthodox sentiments on this subject. But I dare not go beyond my own ideas. I shall not, therefore, attempt to explain the phrase, *eternal generation*, because I must acknowledge that I do not clearly understand it myself. Long before time began, the purpose of constituting the Mediator between God and sinners was established in the divine counsels. With reference to this, he himself speaks, in the character of the Wisdom of God; "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. Then I was by him, as one brought up with him, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and my delights were with the sons of men," Prov. viii. 22, 31. If the Word of God had not engaged, according to an everlasting and sure covenant, to assume our nature, and to accomplish our salvation, before the earth was formed, he would not have appeared afterwards; for we cannot, with reason, conceive of any new determinations arising in the mind of the infinite God, to whom what we call the past and the future are equally present. In this sense (if the expression be proper to convey such a sense,) I can conceive that he was the begotten Son of God from eternity; that is, set up and appointed from eternity for the office, nature, and work, by which, in the fulness of time, he was manifested to men. But if the terms, *begotten* or *eternal generation*, be used to denote the manner of his eternal existence in Deity, I must be silent. I believe him to be the eternal Son; I believe him to be the eternal God; and I wish not to exercise my thoughts and inquiries more than is needful, in things which are too high for me.

The scripture, in different places, evidently applies the purport of this phrase, "I have begotten thee," to transactions which took place in time, *This day*, and particularly to two principal events.

1. His incarnation.—Thus the angel to Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also the holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God," Luke i. 35. So the apostle, "In the fulness of time God sent forth his Son made of a woman," Gal. iv. 4. And in the passage we are next to consider, "When he bringeth his first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him."

2. His resurrection.—To this purpose our text is quoted from the second Psalm. "The promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same to the children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," Acts xiii. 32, 33. And in another place he teaches us, that he who was of the seed of David, according to the flesh, was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead, Rom. i. 4.

After all, I would remind you, that the best knowledge of the doctrine of the person of Christ, that which affords life and comfort to the soul, is to be obtained, not so much by inquiry and study on our part, as by a gracious manifestation on his part. Prayer, attention to the great Teacher, a humble perusal of the scripture, and a course of simple obedience to his known will, are the methods which he has prescribed for our growth in grace, and in the knowledge of himself. Thus even babes are made wise; while they who are wise and prudent in their own sight the more they endeavour to investigate and ascertain the sense of scripture, are frequently involved more and more in perplexity. He has given a promise and direction, for the encouragement of those who sincerely seek him. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him." John xiv. 21.

This is he with whom we have to do. In and by this Son of his love, we have access by faith unto God. Unworthy and helpless in ourselves, from hence we derive our plea; here we find a refuge; and on this we rest, and build our hope, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son; who is so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they, Heb. i. 4.

SERMON XXVIII.

MESSIAH WORSHIPPED BY ANGELS.

——*Let all the angels of God worship him.*
Hebrews, i. 6.

Many of the Lord's true servants have been in a situation so nearly similar to that of Elijah, (1 Kings xix. 10,) that like him they have been tempted to think they were left to serve him alone. But God had then a faithful people, and he has so in every age. The preaching of the gospel may be compared to a standard erected, to which they repair, and thereby become known to each other, and more exposed to the notice and observation of the world. But we hope there are always many, who are enlightened by his word and Holy Spirit, and training up in the life of faith and holiness, known and dear to God, though they have little advantage from public ordinances, and perhaps no opportunity of conversing with those who are like-minded with themselves. But even though the number of those who visibly profess the gospel of the grace of God were much smaller than it is, we need not be disheartened. If our sight could pierce into the invisible world, we should be satisfied that there are more with us than against us, 2 Kings vi. 16. And such a power is attributed to faith. It is the evidence of things not seen, (Heb. xi. 1,) because it receives the testimony of scripture, and rests upon it, as a certainty, and a demonstration; requiring no other proof, either of doctrines or facts, than that they are contained in the sure word of God. True christians therefore are comforted by the assurance they have that their Saviour, the Lord of their hearts, is not so neglected and despised, nor his character so misunderstood and misrepresented in yonder land of light, as in this dark and degenerate world. Though too many here, like Festus, treat it as a matter of great indifference, whether Jesus be dead or alive; (Acts xxv. 19;) and ask them with a taunt, What is your Belovod more than another beloved? they are not ashamed, for they know whom they have believed; and if men will not join with them in admiring and praising him, they are sure that they have the concurrence of far superior beings. By faith they behold him seated upon a throne of glory, adored by all holy and happy intelligent creatures, whether angels, principalities, powers or dominions. And when he was upon earth, in a state of humiliation, though despised and rejected of men, he was seen and acknowledged by angels. Their warrant and ours is the same. He is proposed to us as the object of our supreme love and dependence; and as we are enjoined to kiss the Son and to pay him homage, so when God brought him into the world, he said, "Let all the angels of God worship him."

Though the bringing Messiah, the first or only begotten, into the world, may, as I have observed already, be applied to his incarnation, or to his resurrection. I apprehend it rather designs the whole of his exhibition in the flesh. At his ascension, having finished the work appointed for him to do, he was solemnly invested with authority and glory, and sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. But in his lowest, no less than in his exalted state, the dignity of his divine person is the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He was always the proper object of worship. It was agreeable to right, and to the nature of things, and a command worthy of God, that all the angels of God should worship him.

The holy angels that excel in strength, (Psalm ciii. 20,) always do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word. We might be certain, therefore, that this highest and most comprehensive command a creature is capable of receiving from his Creator, is fulfilled by them, even if we had no express information of the fact. But we have repeated assurances to this purpose. Thus Isaiah, when he saw his glory and spake of him, saw the seraphim standing; each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, saying, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory," Isa. vi. I see not how the force of the argument arising from this passage, to prove that Messiah is the proper object of the most solemn adoration which creatures can offer to the Most High, can be evaded; unless any were hardy enough to assert, either that the prophet was himself imposed upon, or has imposed upon us, by a false vision; or else that the apostle John, (chap. xii. 41,) was mistaken when he applied this representation to Jesus Christ. But the apostle likewise had a vision to the same effect, in which, while his people redeemed from the earth by his blood cast their crowns at his feet, the angels were also represented as joining in the chorus of their praises, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing," Rev. v. 12. In brief, he is the Lord of angels. The heavenly host waited upon him, and sung his praises at his birth. Angels ministered unto him in the wilderness, Luke ii. 13, 14. And they are so entirely his servants, that, at his command, they are sent forth to minister unto, and to attend upon his believing people. Are they not all ministering (λειτουργικα, worshipping) spirits, adoring the divine Majesty, yet sent forth to minister (εις διακονιαν, for service) to the heirs of salva-

tion? Heb. i. 14. He is likewise the head of angels, though they are not in the same near relation to him as the sinners whom he has redeemed with his blood; for he took not on him their nature. There was no redemption appointed for the angels who kept not their first habitation. But the confirmation of those who continue in holiness and happiness, is in and through him, "For all things both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, are gathered together in one (ανακεφαλαιωσασθαι, reduced under one head into one body) in him," Ephes. i. 10. And they are therefore styled, in contradistinction from the others, the elect angels, 1 Tim. v. 21. He is their life, and strength, and joy, as he is ours, though they cannot sing the whole song of his people. It is appropriate to the saved from amongst men to say, This God shines glorious in our nature! he loved us, and gave himself for us!

Here, then, as I have intimated, is a pattern and encouragement for us. The angels, the whole host of heaven, worship him. He is Lord of all. We in this distant world have heard the report of his glory, have felt our need of such a Saviour, and are, in some degree, witnesses and proofs of his ability and willingness to save. He lived, he died, he rose, he reigns for us. Therefore, humbly depending upon his promised grace, without which we can do nothing, we are resolved, that whatever others do, we must, we will worship him, with the utmost power of our souls. It is our determination and our choice, not only to praise and honour him with our lips, but to devote ourselves to his service, to yield ourselves to his disposal, to entrust our all to his care, and to place our whole happiness in his favour. I hope, in speaking thus, I speak the language of many of your hearts.

Some reflections easily offer from this subject, with which I shall close it.

1. They who love him, may rejoice in the thoughts of his glory. They have deeply sympathized with him, when reading the history of his humiliation and passion. It has not been a light concern to them that he endured agonies, that he was rejected, reviled, scourged, and slain. He who suffered these things was their best friend, their beloved Lord, and he suffered for their sakes. In the glass of his word and by the light of his Holy Spirit, he has been set forth as crucified before their eyes, and they have been crucified with him, and have had fellowship with him in his death. From hence they derive their indignation against sin, and their indifference to the world which treated him thus. But now he is no more a man of sorrows; his head, which was once crowned with thorns, is now crowned with glory; his face, which was defiled with spittle, shines like the sun; his hands, which were manacled, wield the sceptre of universal government; and, instead of being surrounded by insulting men, he is now encircled by adoring angels. Therefore they rejoice with joy unspeakable, expecting soon to see him as he is, and to be with him for ever, according to the gracious promise he has made them, and the tenor of his prevailing intercession for them.

2. What an honour does his exaltation and glory reflect upon his faithful followers? The world that rejected him pays little regard to them: they are slighted, or scorned, or pitied, and, in proportion as they manifest his spirit, experience a degree of the treatment which he met with; they are accounted visionaries and hypocrites; many of them are great sufferers, and few of them, comparatively, are distinguished among men by abilities, influence, or wealth; they are pilgrims and strangers upon earth; yet this God is their God. He who is worshipped by angels is not ashamed to call them brethren, Heb. ii. 11. They are nearly related to him who sitteth upon the throne; and he is pleased to account them his portion and his jewels. It doth not yet appear what they shall be; but the day is coming when their mourning shall be ended, their characters vindicated, and they shall shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Lord. They shall stand before him with confidence, and not be ashamed when he appears. Then shall the difference between the righteous and the wicked be clearly discerned. In that day the righteous shall say, "Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation," (Isa. xxv. 9:) while the others, however once admired or feared by mortals, the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, no less than those of inferior rank, shall tremble, shall wish in vain to conceal themselves, and shall say to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, for the great day of his wrath is come," Rev. xvi. 15, 16. In that hour, the striking description in the book of Wisdom (which, though apocryphal, is in this passage quite consonant with the declarations of authentic scripture) will assuredly be realized. "Then shall the righteous man stand in great boldness before the face of such as have afflicted him, and made no account of his labours. When they see it, they shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the strangeness of his salvation, so far beyond all that they looked for; and they, repenting, and groaning for anguish of spirit, shall say within themselves, This was he whom we had sometimes in derision, and a proverb of reproach. We fools counted his life madness, and his end to be without honour. How is he num-

bered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints!" Wisdom, v. 1—5.

3. We may well admire the condescension of this great King, who humbleth himself even to notice the worship of heaven, that he should look upon the worship of sinful men with acceptance, and permit such worms as we are to take his holy name upon our polluted lips. If we know ourselves, we must be conscious of such defects and defilement attending our best services, as are sufficient to affect us with shame and humiliation. What wanderings of imagination, what risings of evil thoughts, what unavoidable though unhallowed workings of self-complacence, mingle with our prayers and praises, and disturb us in our secret retirements, in the public assembly, and even at the table of the Lord! I hope we know enough of this, to be sensible that we need forgiveness, not only for our positive transgressions of his will, but for our sincerest, warmest, and most enlarged attempts to render him the glory due to his name! Yet we are incompetent and partial judges of ourselves; we know but little of the evil of our own hearts, and have but a slight sense of the malignity of that evil which is within our observation. But the Lord searches the heart and the reins; to him all things are naked, without covering, open, without concealment, Heb. iv. 13. He understandeth our thoughts afar of, and beholdeth us exactly as we are. Our dislike of sin is proportionable to our attainments in holiness, which are exceedingly short of the standard. But he is infinitely holy, and therefore evil is unspeakably hateful to him. How vile and abominable therefore must our sins appear in his view! Indeed, if he were strict to mark what is amiss, we could not stand a moment before him, nor would it be agreeable to his majesty and purity to accept any services or prayers at our hands, if we presumed to offer them in our own name. But now there is an atonement provided, and a way of access to a throne of grace, sprinkled with the blood which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. Now that we have an Advocate, Intercessor, and High-Priest to bear the iniquity of our holy things, we are accepted in the Beloved. Now the great and holy God vouchsafes to admit such sinners into communion with himself. He invites us to draw near with boldness; and because of ourselves we know not how to pray as we ought, (Rom. viii. 26,) he favours us with the influence of his Holy Spirit. It is a great instance of the power of faith, that, remembering what we have been, and feeling what we are, and having some right apprehension of him with whom we have to do, we are enabled to approach him with confidence, and to open our hearts to him with greater liberty than we can use to our dearest earthly friends. His people know, by many infallible proofs, that his presence is with them in their secret retirements, and in their public assemblies, according to his promise. He hears and answers their prayers, he revives their spirits, he renews their strength; he gives them reason to say, that a day in his courts is better than a thousand of the world's days. Such are their expectations, and such, in the exercise of faith, is their experience. They worship him whom the angels worship; and they know, that, unworthy and defective as they are, their worship is no less acceptable to him, than that of the angels in glory, by virtue of their relation to him, who is Lord both of angels and men.

4. Hence we may infer the necessity of that change of heart, which the scripture expresses by a new birth, a new life, a new creation, and other representations, which denote it can be effected only by divine power. Till we are the subjects of this operation, we are incapable of enjoying, or even of seeing the kingdom of God, John iii. 3. Though to outward appearance the congregation before me seem all to be serious and attentive, as if engaged in the same design, and animated with the same desire and hope, he to whom our hearts are known, doubtless observes a great difference. Some of you, though custom, or a regard to your connections, brings you hither, yet must be sensible that this is not your chosen ground, and that these are not the subjects which give you pleasure. We preach Christ Jesus and him crucified—Christ Jesus the Lord. The Lord sees, though I cannot, the indisposition of your hearts towards him. You are soon weary and uneasy; and you wish to throw the blame of your uneasiness upon the preacher. You regard his method, his manner, his expressions, with no friendly intention, in hopes of noticing something that may seem to justify your dislike; and a sermon, not very long in itself, is to you very tedious. We wish well to your souls, we study to find out acceptable words; for though we dare not trifle with or flatter you, we are unwilling to give you just offence. But if you will be faithful to yourselves, you may perceive that it is not so much the length or the manner, as the subject of our sermons, that disgusts you. You would, perhaps, hear with more attention and patience, did we speak less of him whom the angels worship. There are assemblies more suited to your taste, and there are public speakers to whom you can probably afford a willing ear, for a much longer time than we detain you; because there you are at home. You are of the world, and you love the world. The amusements, the business, the converse, and the customs of the world, suit your inclination. But here you are not, if I may so speak, in your proper element: and yet it may be, there are persons in the same seat with you,

who think themselves happy to hear what you hear with indifference or disgust. If you knew your state as a sinner, your need of a Saviour, and the excellency and glory of the Saviour whom we preach to you, you likewise would be pleased; and a preacher of very moderate powers would fix your attention, and gain your esteem, if he preached this gospel. But what ideas do you form of a future state? Surely you cannot suppose, that in the eternal world you will meet with any of the poor expedients you have recourse to now, for filling up your time, which otherwise would hang heavy upon your hands. To attempt a detail of the round of vanities which constitute a worldly life, would be unsuitable to the dignity of the pulpit. Let it suffice, that death will remove you from them all. If they are now necessary to what you account your happiness, must you not of course be miserable without them? If you believe you shall exist hereafter, do you not desire heaven? But such a heaven as the word of God describes could not afford you happiness, unless your mind be previously changed and disposed to relish it. Neither the employment nor the company of heaven would be pleasing to you. It is a state where all the inhabitants unite in admiring and adoring him who died upon the cross. If this subject is displeasing to you here, it would be much more so there. Heaven itself would be a hell to an unhumbled, an unholy soul. Consider this seriously, while there is time to seek his face; and tremble at the thoughts of being cut off by death in your present state, insensible as you are of who he is, and what he has done for sinners. May he enlighten your understanding, and enable you to see the things pertaining to your true peace, before they are for ever hidden from your eyes!

SERMON XXIX.

GIFTS RECEIVED FOR THE REBELLIOUS.

Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them. —Psalm lxviii. 18.

When Joseph exchanged a prison for the chief honour and government of Egypt, (Gen. xlv. 4, 5,) the advantage of his exaltation was felt by those who little deserved it. His brethren hated, and had conspired to kill him. And though he was preserved from death, they were permitted to sell him for a bond-servant. He owed his servitude, imprisonment, and sufferings to them; and they were afterwards indebted to him for their lives, subsistence, honour, and comfort; God in a wonderful manner over-ruling their evil conduct for future good to themselves. Thus Jesus was despised, rejected, and sold; and he was actually slain. But he arose and ascended. The man of sorrows took possession of the throne of glory; and not for himself only. His honour is the source of happiness to those who were once his enemies, and rebellious against him. For the sake of such he lived and died. For their sakes he lives and reigns. He fought, conquered, and triumphed over their enemies. As their representative, he received gifts to bestow upon them: such gifts as their necessities required, derived from the relation he was pleased to stand in to them, and from the value and dignity of his engagements on their behalf: such gifts as he alone could communicate, and which alone could restore them to the favour of God, and revive his image in their hearts; so as to make it suitable to his holiness and truth, for the Lord God to return to his polluted temples, and to dwell in them and among them.

I observed, in a former discourse, that this psalm and the twenty-fourth were probably composed and first published on the memorable occasion, when David, having obtained the victory over his numerous enemies, and settled his kingdom in peace, removed the ark, which till then had no fixed residence, into Zion. The apostle's application of this passage, (Eph. iv. 8,) authorises us to consider that transaction as typical of our Lord's ascension. Jesus is the true ark. The holy law of God was in his heart; his obedience unto death was fully commensurate to the demands of the law, (Rom. iii. 25,) as the mercy-seat, or propitiation, which covered the ark, was exactly equal to its dimensions. He who had thus obeyed on earth, ascended on high, the everlasting gates unfolded, and he entered into the holy place not made with hands, there to appear in the presence of God for us, Heb. ix. 24. In this state he is highly exalted upon the throne of glory, and administers all power in heaven and in earth. From hence is the honour, safety, and happiness of those who believe in him. They have nothing to plead for themselves. But unworthy as they are, he is not ashamed to own them; and he assures them, that all he did, and that all he has received, so far as they are capable of sharing in it, is for them. The clauses, as they lie in the text, suggest a convenient method for our meditations, and will lead me briefly to consider four points—

His *ascension*—his *victories*—the *gifts* he received for men—and the great *end* for which he bestows them.

I. His ascension—"Thou hast ascended on high."—God formed man originally for himself, and gave him an answerable capacity, so that no inferior good can satisfy and

fill his mind. Man was likewise, by the constitution and will of his Maker, immortal, provided he persevered in obedience. But sin degraded and ruined him, shut the gates of paradise and the gates of heaven against him. Man destroyed himself; but wisdom and mercy interposed for his recovery. A promise was given of the seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent's head, defeat his policy, destroy his power, and repair the mischiefs he had introduced by sin. Messiah fulfilled this promise. And when he had finished all that was appointed for him on earth, as the second Adam, the head and representative of his people, he ascended on high, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. As an illustrious proof to the universe, that God is reconciled; that there is forgiveness with him for sinners who implore his mercy; one in our nature, and on our behalf, has taken possession of the kingdom. The series of texts in this part of the Oratorio recalls this subject frequently to our thoughts; nor can we think of it too often. It is the foundation of our hopes, the source of our sublimest joys, and the sufficient the only sufficient answer to all the suggestions by which guilt, fear, unbelief, and Satan, fight against our peace. Surrounded as we are with enemies and difficulties, we plead against every accusation and threatening, that our Head is in heaven; we have an advocate with the Father, a High-Priest upon the throne, who, because he ever liveth to make intercession, is able to save to the uttermost. This is all our plea, nor do we desire any other. His ascension on high, is a sure pledge that his servants shall follow him, John xii. 26. And even at present, by faith they ascend and are seated with him in the heavenly places, Eph. ii. 6. They behold invisibles with the eye of their mind; they realize the glorious scene, from which they are separated by the vail of flesh and blood. They know that, even now, day and night, day without night, myriads of golden harps and happy voices resound his praise. The Babe of Bethlehem, the Man who once hung dead and forsaken upon the cross, is now the Lord of glory. In the thought of his glory they greatly rejoice, because they love him, and because they expect shortly to be with him.

II. His victories—"Thou hast led captivity captive." The expression is emphatical. He has conquered and triumphed over all the powers which held us in captivity, so that captivity itself is taken captive. The spirit and force of it is destroyed; and his people, when released by him, and walking in his ways, have no more to apprehend from those whose captives they were, than a conqueror has to fear from a prisoner in chains. The energy of the phrase is not unlike that of the apostle, which we are hereafter to consider, "death is swallowed up in victory." Man by nature is a captive, in a state of confinement and bondage, from which he cannot escape by any address or effort of his own.

He is a captive to sin: a sinful state is a state of bondage; and this, notwithstanding the sinner is a willing captive, speaks swelling words of vanity, and boasts of liberty, while he is the servant, the slave of corruption. He is not always, and in every sense, a willing captive. Conscience sometimes remonstrates, fills him with fears and forebodings, which make him struggle to be free. And there are many sins, which, besides being offences against the law of God, are directly contrary to the sinner's present interest and welfare; and would be so upon his own plan, and if he was wholly his own master, and had no account to render of his conduct. Persons enslaved to habits of lewdness, or drunkenness, need not be told from the pulpit, that the courses they pursue are injurious to their health, their business, or substance, their reputation, and their peace. They know it and feel it, without a monitor. There are seasons, when the ill consequences they bring upon themselves, make them sick of the drudgery, and excite some efforts towards a reform. But in vain. The next return of temptation bears down all their resolutions like a torrent, and, after every attempt to amend, they usually become worse than before. For none can escape, unless the Son makes them free. His grace can overcome the most obstinate habits of licentiousness, and implant the contrary habits of purity and temperance. But they who are not delivered by him must die in their chains.

III. The gifts he received for men—"Thou hast received gifts, even for the rebellious." To bestow gifts upon the miserable is bounty; but to bestow them upon rebels, is grace. The greatness of the gifts contrasted with the characters of those who receive them, displays the exceeding riches of the Redeemer's grace. He came to save, not the unhappy only, but the ungodly. He gives pardon, peace, and eternal life, to his enemies; whose minds are so entirely alienated from him, that until he makes them willing in the day of his power, their minds are determined against accepting any favour from him. They live long in contempt of the law and authority of God; and though justly obnoxious to his displeasure, while left to themselves, they despise and reject the proposals of his mercy. If they sometimes acknowledge themselves to be sinners, they still presume that they are able to procure his favour by their own performances. They strangely imagine they have a sufficient ground of hope, so long as it appears to themselves that they are not altogether so bad as others. And when, by the

gospel, the Lord treats them as sinners already justly condemned by the tenor of his holy laws, and informs them of the exigency of their case; that nothing less than the resources of his infinite wisdom, and the most expensive exertion of his unspeakable love, can possibly save them from destruction; the pride of their hearts rises against his declarations. His wisdom, in their view, is folly; and his love provokes their enmity and scorn. He says of Messiah, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him;" but the language of their heart is, "We will not have him to reign over us," Luke xix. 14. They revile and oppose the messengers of his grace, account them enemies, charge them as troublers of their peace, and as those who turn the world upside down: and, when not restrained by the providence of God, inflict upon them, besides, reproaches, stripes, imprisonment, tortures, and death. If their dearest friends, and those who are connected with them by the nearest ties of relation, submit to the testimony of God, and yield themselves to the appointed Saviour, they are treated as apostates from the general opinion. This defection from the common cause, is often sufficient to cancel the strongest obligations, to dissolve the closest intimacy, to raise a person foes in his own household, and to excite envy, hatred and malice, in those who once professed esteem and love. Can the spirit of rebellion rise higher, than when they who have insulted the authority, defied the power, and resisted the government and will of the great God, proceed at length to trample upon his tenders of reconciliation, and to affront him in that concern which, of all others, is dearest to him, the glory of his grace in the person of his Son! Yet this is no exaggerated representation. Such is the disposition of the heart of man towards God; such were some of us; and such, I fear, some of us are to this hour. I do not say, that this enmity of the carnal mind acts, in every person who is not subject to the grace of God, with equal rage and violence. In a land of light, liberty, and civilization, like ours, a variety of circumstances may concur to set bounds to its exercise; education, a natural gentleness of temper, and even interest, may keep it within limits of decorum, especially towards some individuals; but I affirm, or rather the scriptures declare, that enmity against God, a disaffection to his gospel, no less than to his law, and a dislike to those who profess and obey the truth, are principles deeply rooted in our nature, as fallen; and, however they may seem dormant in some persons for a season, would operate vigorously, if circumstances were so to alter as to afford a fair occasion. For, as of old, he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, (Gal. iv. 29,) even so it is now. And it is still as true as in the apostle's days, that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus, (2 Tim. iii. 12,) shall, in one degree or form or other, suffer persecution from those who will not.

Thus men are characterized in the word of God—Rebels and enemies, having a neck of iron, to denote their obstinacy; a brow of brass, (Isa. xlviii. 4,) to express their insolence and presumption; and a heart of stone, (Ezekiel xxxvi. 26,) insensible to the softest methods of persuasion, incapable of receiving tender, kind, and generous impressions, though they are wooed and besought by the consideration of the mercies of God, of the dying agonies of Messiah, unless that mighty power be displayed in their favour, which brought forth streams of water from the rock in the wilderness.

Messiah died, arose, and ascended on high, that he might receive gifts for rebels of this spirit and disposition. The one grand gift I shall specify, is, indeed, comprehensive of every other good,—the gift of the Holy Spirit. He said to his sorrowing disciples, "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you," John xvi. 7. Soon after his ascension, this promise was fulfilled. The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts ii. 4. 37,) and the people who had slain the Lord were pricked to the heart, repented of their sin, received faith in him whom they had pierced, and experienced joy and peace in believing.

That the gospel is preached upon earth by a succession of ministers called and furnished for that service, and that the gospel, when preached, is not rejected by all, as it is by many, is wholly to be ascribed to the agency of the Holy Spirit, whose office and covenant-engagement it is, to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment (John xvi. 9, 11,) and to glorify Messiah. He opens the eyes of the understanding, subdues the stubborn will, softens, or rather removes the heart of stone, and gives a feeling, tender heart, a heart of flesh. Then the rebels relent and sue for mercy; then they obtain faith, repentance, remission, a full and free salvation, and all the gifts which Messiah has received for them.

IV. His ultimate design in favour of rebellious men, the great final cause of his mediation, and particularly of his bestowing on them the gift of the Holy Spirit, is "that the Lord God may dwell among them." Man was created in the image of God, who formed him for himself. But he sinned and was forsaken. God withdrew his light and love from him, and man sunk into darkness and misery. Sin and Satan took possession of the heart, which was originally designed to be the temple of the living God. But the Lord had a

merciful purpose, to return in a way worthy of his perfections. Without him, the souls of men, and the whole human race, as to their proper happiness, are like what the earth would be without the sun, dark, cold, fruitless, and comfortless. But the knowledge of Messiah, like the sun, enlightens the world and the heart.

When in the day of his power, by the revelation of his light and love, he destroys the dominion of sin, and dispossesses Satan, he reclaims his own, and takes possession for himself. The heart, sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, and anointed with the holy unction, becomes a consecrated temple of the Holy Ghost. This persuasion, though now by many, who have not renounced the name of christian, deemed the essence of enthusiasm, was once thought essential to christianity; so that the apostle speaks of it as an obvious incontrovertible fact, with which no true Christian could be unacquainted. "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" 2 Cor. vi. 19. Again, he speaks of Christ dwelling in the heart, Eph. iii. 17. "Christ in you the hope of glory," Colos. i. 27. And in another place, "Ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them," (2 Cor. vi. 16,) agreeably to his promise by the prophets. He liveth in them, as the principle of their life, wisdom, and power; therefore the apostle says, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," Gal. ii. 20. There is a mutual indwelling between the Lord and his people; they in him as the branch in the vine, and he in them as the sap in the branch; he in them as in his temples, they in him as in their strong tower of defence. And from hence we infer the duration of their life of grace, that it shall continue and spring up into everlasting life, since it is properly not their own, but his; and since he has said, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

He dwells likewise among his people in their collective capacity. His whole church, comprising all the members of his mystical body, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, form a building fitly framed together, a palace, a holy temple for the Lord, the great King. He dwelleth likewise in every particular society who walk by his rule, and adorn the profession of his truth by a conversation becoming the gospel. He is a wall of fire round about them, and a glory in the midst of them, Zech. ii. 5, 10. When they meet together in his name, he is there. He walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks. It is his presence that gives life and efficacy to all his ordinances, and communicates a power to his word, by which the minds of his worshipping people are enlightened, strengthened, healed, and comforted. Here he manifests himself to them, as he does not unto the world, and they can adopt the words of the psalmist, "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand." To his presence they owe their peace and increase, their union and protection. And if he withdraws, Ichabod may be written upon their solemn assemblies; (1 Sam. iv. 21:) for even his own appointments can afford them neither profit nor pleasure, unless they are animated by his glory. Their graces languish, their harmony is interrupted, strifes and dissensions take place, evil roots of bitterness spring up to trouble and defile them; (Hebrews xii. 15;) men arise from among themselves, speaking perverse things, and fierce wolves break in, not sparing the flock (Acts xx. 29, 30,) if the good Shepherd suspends his influence and presence.

I trust he dwells and walks in the midst of us. He is here as an observer, and as a gracious benefactor. He sees who draw near him with their lips, while their hearts are far from him; and he likewise takes notice of them that fear and love him, and who esteem the light of his countenance to be better than life. The high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, who dwelleth in the high and holy place, dwelleth likewise with those that are of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive and bless them, Isa. lvii. 15.

SERMON XXX.

THE PUBLICATION OF THE GOSPEL.

The Lord gave the word, great was the company of those that published it, (or *of the preachers.*) Psalm lxviii. 11.

PERHAPS no one psalm has given greater exercise to the skill and the patience of commentators and critics than the sixty-eighth. I suppose the difficulties do not properly belong to the psalm, but arise from our ignorance of various circumstances to which the psalmist alludes, which probably were at that time generally known and understood. The first verse is the same with the stated form of benediction which was used whenever the ark of the Lord set forward while Israel sojourned in the wilderness, (Numb. x. 35,) which confirms the prevailing opinion, that the psalm was primarily designed as an act of thanksgiving, to accompany the removal of the ark to Zion, by David. The seventh and eighth verses are repeated, with little variation, from the song of Deborah, Judges v. 4, 5. The leading scope of the whole appears to be, first a recapitulation of God's gracious dealing with Israel, and of the great things he had done for them, from the time he delivered them from their bondage in Egypt, and then a transition, in the spirit of prophecy, to the far greater things he

would do for his people, under and by the gospel dispensation, in consequence of Messiah's exaltation to receive gifts for rebellious men. This verse, though the particular occasion is not specified, probably refers to some season of deliverance or victory, when the women, according to the custom of the nation, assembled to praise the Lord, with timbrels, songs, and dances, Exod. xv. The songs and responses of Miriam and her companions, and of the women who welcomed Saul and David after the defeat of the Philistine, (1 Sam. xviii. 6, 7,) I have formerly mentioned as instances. The word which is rendered, *Those who published* or *preached*, being expressed with a feminine termination, leads the mind to this sense. But we are not necessarily confined to it; for the word rendered *preacher* in the book of Ecclesiastes, is likewise in the feminine form, though we are sure the person intended by it was Solomon.

However, this passage is properly introduced in the Messiah, and in its proper place, immediately after the view given of our Saviour's triumphant ascension, as it leads us to consider the first visible effect of that great event; for soon afterwards, when the day of Pentecost was fully come, the Lord gave the word, Acts ii. 1—4. The Holy Spirit, the precious gift, which Jesus had received for rebellious men, descended with visible emblems, and a powerful energy, and inspired and qualified his disciples for the great work of establishing and spreading his spiritual kingdom. From that hour, great was the number of the preachers, and great was the success and efficacy of their mission. So that in a few years the gospel spread like the light, from Jerusalem, through all Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth. And he who said, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world," (Matt. xxviii. 20,) has, by the same Spirit, perpetuated his word, and a succession of preachers, to our time, and has promised to perpetuate and work by the same means, till time shall be no more.

My text, therefore, if not a direct prophecy of the publication of the gospel, is at least a fit motto to a discourse on this very important subject. We may consider it in two senses, which, though something different, are equally agreeable to the words before us, and to the general tenor of the scripture.

I. That the message is the Lord's.—He gave the word, and prescribed to his servants the subject matter of their preaching.

II. That the messengers employed are called and sent forth by him.—The Lord gave the word or command; in consequence of which word, the number of preachers was great, as when in the beginning he said, "Let there be light, and there was light."

I. The Lord gave the word which the multitude of preachers went forth to publish. His merciful design was great,—to deliver sinners from bondage, misery and death: and to bless them with liberty, life, and peace. But they are by nature rebellious and obstinate, and must be made willing. He only can subdue their prejudices, and soften their spirits; and he has promised to display his power in their favour by a certain mean of his own appointment, and we cannot expect that he will do it in any other way. This mean is the gospel, which, for its admirable suitableness and efficacy, is commended to us as his wisdom and his power, 1 Cor. i. 23, 24. He has given it for this purpose, and his blessing makes it successful. He has said concerning it, "As the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be, that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please; it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it," Is. lv. 10, 11. It has been confirmed by the experience of ages, that no mean but this can produce the desirable effect. It is confirmed by observation in the present day. If the wisdom of man, if learning, if oratory, if animated descriptions of the beauty of virtue, and pathetic persuasions to the practice of it, could reform, we should be a reformed people. But alas! this is only to oppose a mound of sand to the violence of a flood. Notwithstanding many ingenious sermons and treatises upon this plan are admired and praised, wickedness prevails and triumphs. They have little influence upon the conduct of civil life; and I may boldly say, no influence to inspire the heart with the love and peace of God, and to bring it into a habit of subjection to his will and command. Nothing will do this but the gospel, the word which the Lord has given. This alone shows the evil of sin in its true light, affords a solid ground for the hope of mercy, and furnishes those motives which alone are sufficient to break the force of the temptations and difficulties with which we have to conflict. When this word is simply and cordially received, an immediate and wonderful change takes place. The sinner abandons his false hopes and vain pursuits, is freed from his former slavery to the love of the world and the fear of man, and becomes the willing servant of him who redeemed him with his own blood.

But we are sometimes asked, what we understand by the gospel? The use of the term in a restrained sense, so as to imply there are but few comparatively who preach it, is deemed invidious and assuming; and it is supposed by many, that a sermon, if delivered from a pulpit, and if the text be taken from the Bible, must of course be the gospel. It is

undeniable, however, that there are a variety of different and opposite sentiments delivered from pulpits; and surely the gospel cannot be opposite, contrary, yea contradictory to itself! It is a mournful consideration, that multitudes of people are not qualified to judge of this point. Not properly for want of ability, for many of them are persons of good sense and discernment, and can judge and talk well upon other subjects; but for want of attention. Their application is engrossed by the demands of business or pleasure, and they have neither leisure nor taste for a careful perusal of the scriptures, nor for the examination of religious sentiments. If the language and elocution of the preacher be good, and if there be no close and painful address to the conscience, they are satisfied. The apostle Paul undoubtedly preached the gospel; and he tells us himself that he preached Christ crucified; he preached Christ, as appointed of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, 1 Cor. i. 30. He preached the cross of Christ, (Gal. vi. 14,) he gloried in it, and he determined to glory in nothing else. The gospel treats all mankind as already in a state of condemnation; it declares their utter inability to save or help themselves; and it gives assurance of pardon and salvation to all who believe in the Son of God. That they may be encouraged and enabled to believe, it describes the dignity of his person, the necessity and greatness of his sufferings, the completeness of his atonement, the prevalence of his intercession—his love, authority, power, and faithfulness. These truths, revealed and applied to a guilty conscience, by the power of the Holy Spirit, produce faith. The sinner perceives the sufficiency and excellency of such a Saviour, commits himself to his compassion and care, and renounces every other hope and service. He looks to the Saviour by the eye of his mind, with desire and admiration, and derives life from his death, healing from his wounds, as the Israelites, when wounded, were healed by looking upon the brazen serpent. And not only is the conscience relieved by this knowledge of Christ crucified—the understanding is likewise enlightened, the judgment is formed, the affections regulated and directed by it. Then old things pass away, all becomes new. The love of sin departs, and the future life is devoted to him, who therefore died and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living, Rom. xiv. 9.

There is likewise a certain energy or power which accompanies the gospel when it is truly preached, which sufficiently characterizes and distinguishes it from all other religious schemes and systems. Our Lord, during his personal ministry, frequently gave proofs that he knew the heart of man. When Zaccheus thought himself unknown and unseen, he called him by his name, Luke xix. 5. He reminded Nathanael of what had passed in secret under the fig-tree; (John i. 48;) and by a few words, brought to the remembrance of the woman of Samaria, all that she had done in her life, John iv. 29. A similar effect accompanies the preaching of his gospel to this day. The gospel is preached, when they who are present find the secrets of their hearts are made manifest; when the preacher, who perhaps never saw them before, reminds them of what they have done, or said, or thought, possibly of things transacted long ago, and almost forgotten by themselves; and likewise describes the very feelings of their hearts while he is speaking to them. It is usually in this way that conviction of sin first takes place; and in this way, that a convinced burdened sinner meets with seasonable support and direction, so exactly suited to his case, that he almost thinks the preacher is speaking to none but himself. No preachers but those who speak in conformity to the word which the Lord gave, have this power over the heart and conscience.

II. It is owing to the word, the appointment, and power of God, that any persons are induced or enabled to preach this gospel. Men may, indeed, assume the office of a preacher upon other grounds; there are too many who do. But though they speak in the name of the Lord, and as his ministers, if he has not sent them, they cannot declare his message in such a manner as to make full proof of their ministry, 2 Tim. iv. 5. They may profit themselves, according to their low views, and may obtain such honours and emoluments as the world can give; but they have not the honour which cometh from God only. They are not wise to win souls, Prov. xi. 30. They have no testimony in the consciences of their hearers. They may deliver truths occasionally, which are valuable and useful in their proper places; but for want of knowing how to connect them with what the apostle styles, The truth as it is in Jesus, (Eph. iv. 21,) they are unable either to break the hard heart, or to heal the wounded spirit. The thoughtless are not alarmed, nor the ignorant instructed. The wicked go on in their evil ways—

> The hungry sheep look up, but are not fed.

Nay, we see, in fact, though a few persons may still be found, who place their religion in a dull, unmeaning attendance upon the form of public worship, upon any form in which it was their lot to be educated, yet, in many places, the bulk of the people, by their contempt of the Lord's day, and by their customary manner of absenting themselves from their appointed teachers, give sufficient proof that they have neither found, nor expect to find, so much benefit or pleasure, as to make them think it worth their while to attend them.

It will appear to competent judges, that faithful preachers are called and prepared for their office by the Lord, the head of the church, and not by human institutions, from the following considerations:—

1. That the gospel cannot be rightly understood but by divine teaching. The natural man, however distinguished by abilities or literature, cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God; (1 Cor. ii. 14;) nay, he cannot even discern them. He may, indeed, know something of the gospel system, considered as a matter of science; he may know how to defend the outworks of Christianity, and be master of the external evidences for its truth; and he may espouse orthodox opinions, and be a successful champion in the field of controversy. But the inward power and life, that which constitutes the essential difference of true religion, is no less remote from his apprehension, than the idea of light is from a person born blind. This he can only learn by experience. The first lesson received and learnt by those who are taught of God, is a conviction of guilt, ignorance, and misery—and then they begin to learn the importance, necessity, and design of the gospel. The man who is thus instructed, if the Lord be pleased to call him to the office of teaching others, will in due time proceed to deliver to the people what he has himself learnt; not with hesitation, uncertainty, or indifference, not what he has acquired by hearsay or from books, but he has the witness in himself, 1 John v. 10. His heart teacheth his mouth, Prov. xvi. 23. He believes, therefore he speaks. He simply and freely declares that which he himself has known, and seen, and tasted of the word of life. And speaking from the fulness of his heart, with an earnestness inspired by the greatness and importance of his subject, he speaks to the heart and feelings of his hearers, and impresses a manifestation of the truth upon their minds.

2. That the desire of preaching this gospel, when known, if it be a right desire, must likewise be given. If a man should attempt the service, without counting the cost, or considering the consequences, he will most probably be disgusted and wearied. And if he seriously and properly considers before-hand what he is about to engage in, and has a due sense of his own weakness, he will tremble at the prospect, and direct his thoughts to some other employment, unless his call and support be from on high. What courage, wisdom, meekness, and zeal, appear requisite, in the view of such an inquirer, to qualify a man for preaching, and continuing to preach, a doctrine so unpleasing to the world, as the doctrine of the cross has in all ages proved! What opposition, and snares, and difficulties, what fightings from without, what fears within, may be expected! Surely he will be ready to shrink back, and to say, Who is sufficient for these things? But the Lord, by the constraining sense of his love, and by giving a deep impression of the worth of souls, and by exciting in the mind a dependence upon his all-sufficiency, can and does encourage those whom he calls and chooses, to serve him in the gospel. In themselves they are quite unequal to what is before them, but they obey his voice; they trust in his promises for guidance and protection, and are not disappointed. We are therefore directed to pray, that the Lord of the harvest would send, or rather (according to the force of the Greek word) thrust forth labourers into his harvest, Matt. ix. 38.

3. That only he who sends forth his ministers can enable them to persevere. It is a service of continual exertion and expense, and requires a continual supply. The opposition of the world, and the power of temptation, acting upon the weakness and depravity of the heart, would quickly prevail against the best ministers, if they were left to carry on the warfare at their own charges. They are at times, yea, frequently, in situations and circumstances which teach them feelingly the meaning of the apostle's words, "We were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life," 2 Cor i. 8. Besides the trials incidental to the christian profession, which they are exposed to in common with others, they have many which are peculiar to their calling as preachers of the gospel. Their chief pre-eminence over christians in private life is a painful one; they have the honour of bearing a double share of the heat and burden of the day, and of standing in the foremost ranks of the battle, to provoke and receive the fiercest assaults of the enemy. Their only resource and hope is in the faithfulness and compassion of their Lord, under whose banner and eye they fight, and who has said, "Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world."

4. That the Lord only can give success to their endeavours. Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but there is no increase unless he affords a blessing, 1 Cor. iii. 6. It is at least a presumptive proof, that he has called a man to preach, if he owns his labours, since he has not promised to own any but those whom he sends.

We must however allow, and observe, that to preach salvation to others, and even to be instrumental in saving souls, will not absolutely prove that the preacher is in a state of salvation himself; we hope it is generally so; but there are exceptions and instances which should awaken our circumspection, and keep us constantly looking to the Lord in a spirit of humility and dependence. There was a Judas among the apostles; and we are assured that at the last day, some, yea, many, will plead having done great things in the name

of Christ, whom he will notwithstanding disown, as workers of iniquity, Matt. vii. 22, 23. Even the apostle Paul was impressed by this thought, and he has recorded the improvement he made of it for our instruction: "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, after I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away, 1 Cor. ix. 27.

SERMON XXXI.

THE GOSPEL-MESSAGE, GLAD TIDINGS.

(*As it is written,*) *How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!* Romans, x. 15.

THE account which the apostle Paul gives of his first reception among the Galatians, (Gal. iv. 15,) exemplifies the truth of this passage. He found them in a state of ignorance and misery; alienated from God, and enslaved to the blind and comfortless superstitions of idolatry. His preaching, accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit, had a great and marvellous effect. His principal subject was the death of Jesus, who had lately suffered as a malefactor at Jerusalem. Though the transaction was past, and the scene at a considerable distance, yet by the manner of his representation, the fact was realized to their minds; and they could have been no more affected, had they been actually upon the spot at the time. Jesus Christ was exhibited to them as crucified before their eyes, Gal. iii. 1. By the same divine energy they were instructed in the knowledge of his character, who he was, and why he suffered; and likewise understood their own need of such a Saviour. Thus they hearkened to him, not with the indifference of the Athenians, but with application of all that he said to themselves. They heard, they believed, and they rejoiced. The apostle reminds them, that they had not received a cold speculative doctrine, but such a one as imparted a blessedness to them. This, indeed, many of them afterwards lost, when they were unhappily seduced by false teachers. But, for a time, the knowledge of a Saviour so exactly suited to their circumstances, made them happy; and while they were so, they felt very strong emotions of gratitude and esteem for the messenger who brought them these glad tidings; though he was by many accounted and treated as the off-scouring and filth of all things, the Galatians received him as an angel of God, and attended to him, as if the Lord, who sent him, had spoken to them in person. And although he had till then been an entire stranger to them, his message opened a way to their hearts, and they gave him every testimony of the most cordial friendship; insomuch that, had it been possible, they would have plucked out their own eyes, and have given them to him.

Thus, likewise, when Philip preached the gospel in Samaria, the consequence was great joy in that city, Acts viii. 8. But when the gospel is thus gladly received, there must be a suitable disposition of mind. It is sent to the poor. It is designed to heal the broken-hearted, to deliver the captives, and to give sight to the blind, Luke iv. 18. And therefore they who are well satisfied with themselves, who say, we see, and who boast of their freedom, cannot possibly judge either of the truth or of the importance of the gospel doctrine. As the Lord waters the earth with a profusion worthy of his magnificence and bounty, and does not confine his rain to cultivated soils; so the good seed of his word often falls upon the highway, upon the rocks, and among thorns; (Luke viii. 13—15;) but it is only productive upon the good ground of an honest and good heart. Not that any human heart is truly good by nature, but some are prepared for the reception of the truth. And this preparation is the first effect of the word, when it brings forth fruit unto life eternal. It undeceives those who were for a time deluded with vain hopes, and convinces them that they are poor, and blind, and wretched, and helpless. Then they gladly accept the gospel of peace, and the message is to them as life from the dead.

The passage in the prophet Isaiah, from which my text is quoted, is very animated and descriptive. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings!" Isa. lii. 7. Imagine a distressed people, at the will and disposal of a conqueror, who was justly offended with them, and under an anxious trembling uncertainty how he would treat them:—if an authorized messenger should inform them, that, instead of the punishment they deserved, the king vouchsafed them a free pardon, was ready to receive them with favour, and to bestow honours and possessions upon all who applied to him, without excepting the most guilty, even the ring-leaders in rebellion: how welcome would this messenger be to them! This, indeed, is beyond the manner of men. No earthly monarch has either magnanimity to make, or power to make good, so gracious and unlimited a proclamation to a whole nation of rebels. But this is the manner of the great God. Such an act of grace is the gospel. An act of grace to sinners, yet founded in righteousness, and displaying the glory of his justice equally with the riches of mercy. For it is founded on the mediation of the Son of his love, and procured by his blood. The messengers of this grace are thus welcomed and honoured by those who believe

their report, and are esteemed very highly in love for their work's sake, 1 Thess. v. 13. We may observe,

I. The message of the gospel is glad tidings of peace and good things.

II. The messengers, or preachers, find ample reward in their success and acceptance.

I. According to the Hebrew idiom (which frequently obtains in the New Testament,) all good things are comprised in the term *peace*. They are eminently comprised in the peace of the gospel; for it is the peace of God which passeth understanding. It brings a blessed assurance, that Messiah has made peace by the blood of his cross. They who believe this good report, derive from it peace of conscience; and are enabled to say, Though thou wert justly angry, thine anger is turned away, Isa. xii. 1. It dispels their fears and forebodings, and inspires them with liberty to come to God as children; consequently, on their parts, alienation and enmity cease. They no longer conceive of him as an avenging judge or a hard master. They no longer dispute his authority, nor repine at his appointments. They become a willing people. They yield themselves to him. They cultivate peace in all their connections. The forgiveness and bounty they have received, teaches them likewise to forgive, and be kind as they have opportunity. They possess such good things as the world can neither give nor take away: communion with God; grace, wisdom, and power. They serve him with their all, and are supported by his good Spirit in every trying circumstance; and they have a good hope, which enables them to rejoice in tribulation, and to smile in death.

If the wickedness and obstinacy of mankind were not so strongly described and exemplified in the Bible, and if we could forget that this obstinate perverseness was once our own character, we should find it difficult to conceive, after we understand the nature and design of the gospel, upon what grounds a scheme so wisely and completely adapted to relieve men from misery, to promote their present comfort, and to secure their future happiness, should, instead of being received with thankfulness, generally excite contempt and opposition. Can the world afford a peace which shall abide and cheer the heart under all the changing circumstances incident to us in this mortal state? Can it propose any good, any honours, profit, or pleasures, worthy of being compared with the honour which cometh from God only, the light of his countenance, and the riches of glory? Can the influence of the world preserve us from trouble, or support us under it, or deliver us out of it? Has it any charms capable of soothing the anguish of a wounded conscience? Can it obviate the stroke, or overcome the fear of death? Or can it inspire the soul with confidence and joy, in the contemplation of that approaching day, when we must all appear before the tribunal of the supreme Judge? That the world, if we possessed the whole of it, cannot do these things for us, is acknowledged by many, and felt by all. The gospel proposes a cordial for every care, a balm for every wound; and none who make the experiment of its efficacy are disappointed. In other cases, they who have received great obligations may speak highly of their benefactor; and they who, beyond hope, have been recovered from a dangerous malady, may commend the skill and care of their physician, to those who are labouring under the same disease, without giving offence. But if they who have obtained life and peace by believing in Jesus, proclaim his goodness, and point him out to their fellow-sinners as the only Physician and Saviour of souls, their testimony is charged with folly, and their endeavours rejected with scorn, as officious and impertinent. Men, while left to themselves, will not come to him that they may have life. The god of this world so works upon their prejudices, pride, and passions, that though the light of truth shines around them like the light of the sun, the eyes of their mind are blinded, and they are pleased with their darkness, and unwilling to see, 2 Cor. iv. 4. Hence, of the few, comparatively, who are favoured with a clear and faithful dispensation of the gospel, the greater part, it is to be feared, reject the counsel of God against themselves; and his ministers in all ages, have had cause to adopt the prophet's complaint, "Lord, who hath believed our report?" Is. liii. 1. It would be thus universally, if the Lord, who gave the word, and who sends forth the preachers, had not engaged his promise, that they shall not labour wholly in vain, nor spend their strength for nought. He prepares a people to serve him, and to show forth his praise. And while some mock, others refuse to hear, (Acts xvii. 32,) and others, with an indolent indifference, are content to hear again and again; there are others whose hearts are opened to receive the truth in the love of it. They hear and believe to everlasting life.

II. The instruments of this happy change find their reward in their work. It being owned to the salvation of a few, they are compensated for all the opposition they meet with from the many; and this on a twofold account:—

First, and principally, for the love they bear to their Lord, and to souls for his sake.

To see his name made precious to the hearts of sinners; to see those who were blind admiring his excellency; to see those who were so far off from God brought so nigh; to see those who were wretched rejoicing in his goodness; to hear those whose lips were

filled with folly, falsehood, or blasphemy, proclaiming his praise; such salutary effects of their ministry fill them likewise with praise and joy: and when their hearers express the power and spirit of the gospel in their tempers and conduct, they can say, "Now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord," 1 Thess. iii. 8.

A secondary satisfaction, which of itself is sufficient to make them full amends for all the scorn of an unkind world, is the share they have in the affections of the people who are thus benefited by their ministry. This is the popularity which alone is desirable. It would be a small thing to be able merely to hold a multitude by the ears: but to be approved and loved by those to whom the Lord has made them useful, is a high honour, and a source of sublime pleasure. When Peter and John (Acts iii. 11) had healed the lame man, I doubt not but they were more affected by the simple honest testimony of his gratitude, than by the unmeaning wonder of all the surrounding multitude. If a true servant of the Lord, by any advantage of abilities or elocution, should attach a large congregation to a personal regard for himself, should be admired and beloved by them, and yet discover no attachment in them to the Saviour whom he preaches, their partiality to him would give him but little pleasure. He would be more ready to weep over them, than to rejoice in the preference they gave him. For he seeks not their applause, but their edification; and he aims not to promote his own glory, but the glory of him who sent him, John vi. 18. He is, indeed, glad to see them attending upon the means which God has promised to bless. But the faithfulness and closeness of his addresses to their consciences, by which many are sooner or later disgusted and driven away, is a proof that he does not want them merely to make up a number about him. They who make the office of a preacher an occasion whereby to promote their own interest or reputation, may, perhaps, obtain the reward they seek; but it is such a reward as can only satisfy a weak and mercenary mind; and from him, whose name they prostitute, they can only expect the reward assigned to hypocrites and unbelievers.

But true christians will, and do, set a high value upon the ministers who, with simplicity and godly sincerity, preach the gospel of peace, in such a manner as to evidence that they are influenced by a regard to the glory of God, and to the good of souls; and they give proof of their affection in more ways than by speaking well of them.

1. By the satisfaction with which they accept a faithful ministry, as a balance to the trials they meet with in common life. There are many poor and many afflicted people, who have little comfort in the things of this life, and in their own houses. Some are pinched by penury, and some who live in opulence, yet dwell, as the psalmist expresses it, (Psalm lvii. 4,) in the fire and among lions. They suffer not less than the others, though in a different way, from the unkindness and opposition of their nearest connections. But in the house of God, they are satisfied and comforted. And, according to the words of the prophet, though the Lord is pleased to give them the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, (Is. xxx. 20,) yet since their teachers are not moved into corners, but they have free access to the preaching of his word, and can attend upon a minister who careth for their souls, and meets them, when they are weary, with a word in season, they bear their appointed cross with cheerfulness. Though they have much bitterness of heart at home, known only to themselves, they have a pleasure which a stranger intermeddleth not with, when they go up to the house of the Lord. But if the instrument who is the messenger of God to them for good, be removed, and they are deprived of these opportunities, the regard they bore him is manifested by their sorrow for losing him; which often affects them more sensibly than all their other griefs.

2. By taking kindly and in good part his most searching discourses in public, or even his reproofs and admonitions in private, if needful. For they know that he watches over their souls, as one who must give an account, Heb. xiii. 17. And because they love him, they do all in their power to make the service a pleasure and not a grief to him. They do not wish him to speak smooth things to them, or to entertain them with the discussion of points in which they have little concern, but to hear that which is suitable to their own case and circumstances. And if the preacher discovers to them, that through inadvertence, they have allowed themselves in any wrong practice, or have lived in the omission of any duty, instead of being offended with his plain dealing, they love him the better for it.

3. By their tenderness and sympathy with him in all his exercises; and by their care, according to their ability, to make his situation comfortable, and to avoid every thing that might give him just occasion for complaint or grief. The trials of a faithful minister are neither few nor small. His work is great; he is sure to meet with enemies and discouragements. He travails in birth for souls; (Gal. iv. 19;) he is pained by the opposition of the wicked, the inconstancy of the wavering, and the inconsistency of many who make profession of the truth. He feels many anxieties for those who are inquiring the way to the kingdom, lest they should be turned aside and hindered; and too often the hopes he had indulged, of some who disco-

vered a concern for religion, are disappointed. His inward conflicts are many. He often walks in much weakness, fear, and trembling, 1 Cor. ii. 3. When he considers what he is, what he ought to be, and what he has to do, he is often distressed, afraid, and ashamed, and unable to speak. His path is spread with snares, his heart wounded with temptations. But his judicious hearers have some knowledge of what he endures for their sakes and in their service; they love him, pity him, and pray for him, and their kind attention comforts him under all his tribulations.

Sometimes their regard is rather improperly expressed; as when they not only value his ministry, but hold him so highly a favourite, that they can hardly hear another. A preference is certainly due to the person who is made especially useful; but no faithful preacher should be slighted. Though gifts and abilities are not equal in all, yet they are all the Lord's messengers, and entitled to regard.

Again, it is an improper regard, if they yield themselves implicitly to him, to be governed by his will. So far as we speak agreeably to the scripture, which is the rule and standard of faith and practice both to you and to us, we are authorised to require your attention and obedience; but you are not bound to receive what we propose, merely upon our own authority. There are those who account ignorance the mother of devotion, and expect an implicit compliance with their injunctions, by virtue of their office and personal influence. But a true minister will account it his honour and pleasure to preach to an enlightened people who love and study the Bible, and, like the Bereans, search the scriptures, (Acts xvii. 11,) to see if things are so as represented. We have no dominion over your faith, but wish to be helpers of your joy, 2 Cor. i. 24. Nor do we pretend to dominion over your purses, though we are to remind you of the apostle's charge, "To do good, and to communicate, forget not," Hebrews xiii. 15.

How much are they to be pitied, who account that word of grace a burden, which to those who receive it with thankfulness, proves the balm and cordial of life! Take heed how you hear. If the gospel is not made to you a savour of life, it will be a savour of death. It will aggravate your guilt and condemnation, and leave you utterly hopeless and inexcusable. If you continue impenitent and obstinate, the hour is coming when you will wish you had never heard of the name of Jesus. It had been better for you never to have been born, or to have lived and died among the savage Indians, or to have been an idiot or a lunatic to the end of your days, than to have lived where the doctrine of salvation was published in your hearing, if you finally reject the counsel of God against yourselves!

SERMON XXXII.

THE PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL.

——*Their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.* Romans, x. 18.

The heavens declare the glory of God, Psalm xix. 1. The grandeur of the arch over our heads, the number and lustre of the stars, the beauty of the light, the splendour of the sun, the regular succession of day and night, and of the seasons of the year, are such proofs of infinite wisdom and power, that the scripture attributes to them a voice, a universal language, intelligible to all mankind, accommodated to every capacity. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. The combined effect of the visible works of the great Architect, presses a declaration upon the ear of reason—"The hand that made us is divine." We must, however, understand it of the ear of right reason. The loudest voice is unnoticed by the deaf. Thus it ought to be, and thus it would be, if man were indeed a rational creature, as he proudly boasts himself. That the fact in general is otherwise; that the bulk of mankind are no more affected by the works of God than the beasts of the field; that the philosophers who profess to study them, so faintly discern, so frequently deny the great First Cause of all, is a proof that sin has darkened and depraved the noblest powers of the soul, and degraded man into the state of an inattentive idiot. However, the evidence, if it does not excite his admiration and praise, is abundantly sufficient to convict him of stupidity and ingratitude, and to leave him without excuse, Rom. i. 20.

This passage, taken from that sublime ode of David, the nineteenth psalm, is applied by the apostle to illustrate the character and the progress of the still more wonderful display of the divine perfections, which God has made known by the glorious gospel. A variety of truths shine (like stars in the firmament) in the system of revelation. But principally Jesus, the Sun of truth and righteousness, the source of spiritual light and life, answers to the description there given of the material sun. "His going forth is from the end of heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it, and there is nothing hid from his heat," Psalm xix. 6.

But the fulfilment of the promises respecting Messiah's kingdom is progressive. So far as this prophecy has been accomplished, the arm of the Lord has been revealed. It

is his doing and may justly be marvellous in our eyes. The truth of the prophecy will be proved by its final completion, which, though not likely to take place in our time, we may be assured that it cannot fail, for the Lord hath spoken it. And besides, we have a sufficient pledge and security for the whole, in what he has already done. It was not necessary for the fulfilling of this prophecy, nor consistent with the tenor of many other prophecies, that the spread of the gospel should be instantaneous and universal on its first publication. Messiah is to rule in the midst of his enemies till the appointed season, when all enemies shall be subdued under his feet. The gospel, the rod of his power, is so admirably adapted to the necessities of mankind, that the obstructions it has met with must be ascribed to their wickedness and obstinacy. Not that they could resist the will of God. Had he intended to give it universal success from the beginning, the event would have been answerable. But it was his pleasure to conduct the dispensation of it, so as, on the one hand, to display his sovereignty, wisdom, and power, and on the other, to afford a full proof of the depravity and alienation of the heart of man. This point is so much misunderstood and misrepresented, that though it is attended with great difficulties, especially if we give way to vain reasonings upon it, I shall venture, in the present discourse, to offer a few thoughts towards clearing the subject, and vindicating (if the very attempt be not presumptuous) the ways of God to man.

When the Sun of righteousness, after a long night of darkness, arose upon the world, there appeared a strong probability that the prophecies concerning the extent of his vital influence, from east to west, from pole to pole, would soon be completely realized. In a very short space he was known and adored by multitudes, through the greatest part of the Roman empire, and beyond its limits. But, perhaps, for about seventeen hundred years since that period, the boundaries of his kingdom, though they have been altered, have not been much enlarged. If he has since in some measure enlighted the more western parts of the globe, the eastern regions, which once rejoiced in his light, are now overwhelmed with gross Mahommedan darkness. And if we were capable of investigating the state of the world at this day, we should probably find, that five out of six of the human race now living, never so much as heard of the name of Jesus as a Saviour. There is reason to fear likewise, that in the nations who professedly call him Lord, and are not unwilling to be themselves called Christians, a greater proportion than five out of six, are no less strangers to his power and grace, than the Mahommedans who reject him, or the Heathens who never heard of him.

There is not, perhaps, a darker chapter in the book of divine providence, nor a meditation which calls for a more absolute subjection and submission to the holy will and unsearchable wisdom of God, than this. The first spread of the gospel proved it to be a divine expedient, fully capable of producing all the great purposes which the prophets had foretold, and which the state of the world required. It reconciled men to God, to themselves, and to each other. It subdued their passions, regulated their affections, freed them from the guilt and bondage of sin, from the love of the world, and from the fear of death. Wherever the doctrine of the cross was preached, it produced that salutary change of conduct which philosophy had long attempted in vain; and raised men to that life of communion with God, of which philosophers had no conception. Such was the bright morning of the gospel-day. But in time, yea, in a little time, dark clouds obscured its light; its progress was impeded, and in a manner stopped. On one hand, the profession and name of the gospel gave occasion to mischiefs and abominations which had been unknown among the Heathens; so that the part of the world which received the name of Christendom, was little distinguished from the rest, in a religious view, but by a fierce and rancorous superstition, which tyrannized over the consciences, liberties, and the lives of men. On the other hand, as I have observed, the very name of Christianity was restrained to a small portion of the earth; many nations have not heard of it to this day; and many who once professed it, have renounced it long ago.

Thus the fact stands. We cannot deny it. But how shall we account for it? Infidels and petty reasoners think they here find an invincible objection against the truth. They say, "If the gospel you speak of be so salutary and necessary, if it be indeed the greatest effect of the divine goodness, why has not God, who is the common Father of mankind, afforded it to all the nations of the earth? and why is it restrained to so few?" But I think we may retort the question, and let them who propose it give such an answer (if they can) as shall not amount to a confession of the obstinacy and ungrateful folly of mankind. When the world saw the happy tendency and effects of this gospel in the age of the apostles, why did they not universally receive it! We know that when the use of the mariner's compass, the art of printing, and many other inventions that might be named, were discovered in one country, they were presently adopted by the surrounding civilized nations. Even the recent attempts to venture through the air with a balloon, hazardous as they certainly are, and insignificant with respect to real usefulness, are likely in a little time not only to engage the notice, but to excite the imitation of Europe.

Why then was the gospel, the most beneficial and important discovery the world has been favoured with, the only one that has been treated with general contempt? Certainly our Lord has assigned the true reason, "Light is come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil," John iii. 19. They hate the light, they will not come to it, nor will they permit it to come to them if they can possibly prevent it. This glorious gospel of the blessed God has been and still is shunned and dreaded, and every human precaution and exertion has been employed to withstand and suppress it, as though, like the pestilence, it was baneful to the welfare of society. May we not say, speaking after the manner of men, that the Lord has done enough to confirm his own express and solemn declaration, that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked may turn from his way and live? Ezek. xxxiii. 11. He has raised up a succession of faithful servants, from age to age, to publish these glad tidings. The reception they have met with, not only from the Heathens, but from nominal christians, is well known to those who are acquainted with ecclesiastical history, which contains little more than a detail of the arts and cruelties by which the civil and ecclesiastical powers of almost every kingdom, where the gospel has been known, have endeavoured to suppress it.

The nation of Great Britain, in particular, has but little right to ask, Why the gospel of Christ has been spread no farther among the Heathen? The providence of God has favoured us with peculiar advantages for this service. Our arms and commerce have opened us a way to the most distant parts of the globe; and of late years, the enterprising spirit of our navigators has added almost a new world to the discoveries of former times. How far have our plans been formed with a subserviency to the great design of evangelizing the Heathen? How much have we done to promote it in Asia, where our influence and opportunities have been the greatest? What impression of the name and spirit of christianity has our conduct given to the inhabitants of India? But I forbear—Facts are too well known to need recital; too glaring to need a comment. It is true, we have an incorporated society for propagating the gospel in foreign parts, and we hear of missionaries; but of the good effects of their missions, as at present conducted, we neither hear, nor expect to hear. While America was ours, the efforts of a few individuals from the northern provinces in the last and present century, were not without success. But I fear this is all the honour we can claim. Some good has been done by the Danish mission to Tranquebar; but I believe our influence in it has been rather nominal than effective. The extent and effects of the labours of the *Unitas Fratrum*,* compared with their circumstances and resources, must not be omitted on this occasion. They doubtless excite admiration, and thankfulness to God, in every serious mind acquainted with the subject. But excepting in these instances, I believe the Heathens have derived but little knowledge of the Gospel from their connexions with Christendom for some ages past. And I think none of the commercial nations in Europe have had the propagation of Christianity less at heart than the English. What obligations the natives of Africa are under to us, for instruction or example, may be estimated, in part, by a cursory survey of the state of our West-India Islands!

That the gospel is so little known in the world, and so little received where it is known, cannot be so properly ascribed to the will of God, as to the wickedness and wilfulness of men. Undoubtedly, he to whom all things are possible, who has absolute power over the hearts of his creatures, could make a way for the universal reception of it. And we trust that in his own time he will do so. But power is not his only attribute. It would be rash and absurd to suppose that the great God will do every thing that he can do. We are sure that he will do what is worthy of himself; but of this his own infinite wisdom is the only competent judge. What is becoming of his perfections and holy government, we can know no farther than he is pleased to inform us. But it certainly becomes us to lay our hands upon our mouths, and our mouths in the dust, when we contemplate his conduct; or, if we do speak, to adopt the apostle's language, "Oh the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For of him, and through him, and to him are all things. To whom be glory for ever," Rom. ix. 36.

However, my text is fulfilling, and shall be fulfilled. This joyful sound has already been spread far abroad, in defiance of all attempts to restrain it. Multitudes from age to age have heard it, and found it to be the power of God unto salvation. And it would be easy to prove, if it belonged to my subject, that the superior advantages of civilization which Christendom enjoys, are remotely owing to the knowledge of revelation. To this must be chiefly ascribed the different state of this island from what it was when visited by Julius Cæsar. Yea, our modern philosophers would make but a poor figure, were they despoiled of all the plumes they have borrowed form the book they affect to despise. Farther, the purpose of God to save sinners by faith in his beloved Son, is the primary ground of that patience and long-suffering which he still ex-

* More generally known amongst us by the name of the Brethren, or Moravians.

ercises toward such a world as this. And some imperfect traces of this design, transmitted by tradition, are probably to be found, though wofully disfigured, among every nation and people under heaven which have at least preserved, in a degree, the notices of right and wrong, and some faint warnings of conscience, in the most savage state of human nature. But, were it not for reasons connected with the designs of his mercy, we can scarcely conceive that the Holy God would have perpetuated the race of mankind in a state of rebellion and enmity against his government. Or if he had permitted them to multiply, and left them wholly and absolutely to themselves, without interposing some restraints upon their depravity, I believe the inhabitants of the earth would have been no better than incarnate fiends.

The prophecies, both of the Old and New Testament, encourage us to hope for a time, when the light of gospel-truth will break forth with meridian brightness, the glory of the Lord be revealed, and all flesh shall see his salvation. As a pledge of this, and of the truth of the whole scripture, we have what may be called a standing miracle continually before our eyes; I mean the state of the Jews, who, though dispersed far and wide among many nations, are every where preserved a distinct and separate people. The history of the world affords no other instance of the like kind. The great monarchs, by which they were successively conquered and scattered, have successively perished. Only the names of them remain. But the people whom they despised, and endeavoured to exterminate, subsist to this day; and though sifted like corn over the earth, and apparently forsaken of God, are still preserved by his wonderful providence, unaffected by the changes and customs around them; still tenacious of the law of Moses, though the observance of it is rendered impracticable. Many days, many ages they have lived, as the prophets foretold they should, without a temple, without sacrifice or priest, Hos. iii. 4, 5. As yet, many heathen nations are permitted to walk in their own ways. But at length the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, and all Israel shall be saved, Rom. xi. 25, 26. The revolutions and commotions in kingdoms and nations, which astonish and perplex politicians, are all bringing forward this great event. The plan of the human drama, to us, who only see a single scene, is dark and intricate; but the catastrophe is approaching; and in the close of the whole, the manifold wisdom of God will be admired and adored, and all holy and happy intelligences will acknowledge with transport, He has done all things well.

But the point I am chiefly to press upon my hearers, is, that this word of salvation is sent to you, Acts xiii. 26. How the great Judge will deal with the Heathens, who were never favoured with it, he has not seen fit distinctly to inform us. But thus far he has assured us, that it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, yea, for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for those who have the privilege of knowing the gospel, if they reject it, Matt. xi. 20—24. To them much is given, and of them much will be required. Do not think ministers assuming if they magnify their office. We have no reason to think highly of ourselves. Nor would you be blameable for disregarding us if we spoke in our own names. But if we preach the truth of the gospel in simplicity and sincerity, then we speak in the name of the Lord, and demand your attention. Do you ask for our authority and commission? Ask your own consciences. If, like Felix, when you mean only to indulge your curiosity by hearing us, you are constrained to tremble (Acts xxiv. 25;) if we force upon your mind the remembrance of what you have said or done; if our message makes you uneasy and dissatisfied with yourselves; if you cannot avoid feeling at some times the truth of our principles, and the necessity of the change we would press upon you; if, though you have been repeatedly displeased and offended with what you hear, and, perhaps, have gone away purposing or threatening that you would hear it no more, you still appear amongst us—then you have a sufficient proof, that the ministers are sent and authorized to speak to you, and we take your consciences to witness that we preach the truth.

SERMON XXXIII.

OPPOSITION TO MESSIAH UNREASONABLE.

Why do the Heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed; saying, let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. Psalm, ii. 1—3.

It is generally admitted, that the institutes of Christianity, as contained in the New Testament, do at least exhibit a beautiful and salutary system of morals; and that a sincere compliance with the precepts of our Lord and his apostles would have a good effect upon society. Few infidels have ventured to contradict the common sense of mankind so far as to deny this. Nor can it be denied, that the author of this institution, if we judge by the history and character given of him by the evangelists, exemplified, in the highest perfection, by his own conduct, the precepts which he enjoined to his followers. While he lived as a man amongst men, the tenor of his behaviour was such as became

the friend of mankind. Though he submitted to a low estate, and often suffered hunger, thirst, and weariness, we do not read of his having wrought a single miracle merely for his own relief. But the wants and calamities of others continually excited his compassion and engaged his assistance. He gave sight to the blind, health to the sick, and sometimes wiped away the tears of mourners, by restoring their dead to life. He endured hunger himself, but once and again provided food for multitudes, lest they, having nothing to eat, should have fainted by the way. Nor did he confine his acts of benevolence to his followers, but was easy of access, and granted the request of all, indiscriminately, who applied to him. He went about doing good, (Acts x. 38,) and often put himself in the way of those who would not otherwise have known him. And though he was opposed, calumniated, and laughed to scorn, he continued unwearied and determined in the same cause, bestowing benefits on all around him, as occasions offered, and returning good for evil. May we not with reason ask, Why then did Jews and Heathens, priests and people, scribes and Sadducees, rage so furiously against him, who did nothing amiss, who did all things well? Why did persons of the most opposite interests, parties, and sentiments, who could agree in nothing else, so cordially agree in opposing Messiah?

The gospel breathes the spirit of its great Author, and has a direct tendency to make men happy and useful. Wherever it was published, in the first age, among the Heathens, many of them turned from the worship of dumb idols to serve the living and true God. It taught and enabled them to renounce ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly; (Titus ii. 12;) and it still produces the same effects. The world now bears the name of Christian; but under this new and honourable name it retains the same spirit as formerly. Many who are called Christians, are no less under the power of evil tempers and evil habits, than the Heathens to whom the apostles preached. But where the gospel of the grace of God reaches the heart, a real and observable change is produced. The profane person learns to fear an oath, the libertine is reclaimed, the drunkard becomes sober, and the miser kind. Wherever the truth of the gospel is known and received, instances may be found of persons who were a terror and a burden to their families, being delivered from the stings of a guilty conscience, from the dominion of headstrong passions, from the slavery of habitual wickedness, and made peaceful, useful, and exemplary members of society, by what the apostle calls the preaching of the cross. And we challenge history to show that an abiding, consistent reformation was ever effected by any other doctrine, in a single province, or city, or village, or even in a single family.

What then shall we say of that zeal which kindled the fire of persecution against our Lord and his apostles, and his followers, through a succession of ages? What is the common principle, the bond of union, which at this day connects people who differ so widely in other respects, and points their displeasure from all sides against this one object? In a former discourse,* I briefly mentioned the principal grounds of that dislike which the Jews manifested to Messiah's personal ministry, and I observed, that they are deeply rooted in the nature of fallen man, and therefore not peculiar to any one age or nation. The gospel always did, and always will produce the same happy change in those who receive it, and provoke the same opposition and resentment in those who do not. The actings will be different as circumstances vary, but the principle is universally the same. In this island, which the good providence of God has distinguished by many signal and peculiar favours, the spirit of our constitution and government is friendly to liberty of conscience and the rights of private judgment; so that our religious profession does not expose us to the penalties of fire and sword, stripes or tortures, imprisonment or banishment. Such trials have been the lot of our forefathers, when the servants of God, under the names of Gospellers or Puritans, were treated as heretics of the worst sort. We are bound to acknowledge with thankfulness the blessings of religious and civil liberty which we enjoy. But the world at large around us is not more favourably disposed to the grace and rule of Messiah's kingdom, than it was in the days of Heathen and Popish darkness. The tongue at least is unrestrained, and out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak. The gospel offends the pride of men, by considering them all on a level, as sinners in the sight of God; and by proposing only one method of salvation, without admitting any difference of plea or character. It offends them likewise by its strictness. Like Herod, they might perhaps consent to do many things, (Mark vi. 20,) if they were left at liberty to please themselves in others, in which, though expressly contrary to the will of God, they will not submit to be controlled; and therefore they are much displeased with the gospel, which, by affording no allowance or connivance to the least known sin, but prescribing a rule of universal holiness, crosses their inclinations and favourite interests. When Paul preached at Ephesus, Demetrius and his companions perceived that their craft was in danger. This was the real cause of their anger, but they were ashamed

* Sermon. xvii.

to avow it; and therefore their ostensible reason for opposing him was of a religious kind, (Acts xix. 28,) and they professed a great concern for the honour of Diana. Few perhaps would have given themselves much trouble to promote or preserve the gain of the craftsmen; but a pretended regard for the worship which had been long established, was a popular topic, which wrought powerfully upon the superstition of the ignorant multitude, and thousands were presently induced to join with them in the cry, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians."

The like arts are still practised with the like success. The same secret motives are disguised by the same plausible pretences. The deceitfulness and wickedness of the heart appears in no one instance more plainly than in the cavils which are repeated and multiplied against the grace of the gospel. When we preach a free salvation by faith in Jesus, and propose his obedience unto death as the sure and only ground of acceptance with God; when we say, in the words of the apostle, to the vilest of sinners who feel the burden, and fear the consequences of their sins, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," (Acts xvi. 31,) an alarm is raised, and a concern pretended for the interests of morality. The doctrine of salvation by faith only, is charged with opening a door, a floodgate for licentiousness, and it is supposed, that if this doctrine be true, people may live as they please, and still comfort themselves with the expectation of heaven at last. Considering our natural propensity to trust in ourselves that we are righteous, I do not wonder that persons who are comparatively sober and decent should speak thus, while they are ignorant of the strictness of the holy law of God, and the depravity of their own hearts. But I sometimes wonder that they are not a little disconcerted by the characters of many (so different from what they suppose their own to be) who join with them in the objections they make. For in this point, with the sober and decent, the licentious and profligate readily concur; and whoremongers, adulterers, drunkards, and profane swearers, almost equal them in gravely expressing their apprehensions that the doctrine of salvation by grace will prove very unfavourable to the practice of good works. How very remarkable is this, that the virtuous and the vile, the most respectable and the most infamous people, should so frequently agree in sentiment, and unite in opposing the gospel, professedly from the same motive. But thus it was at the commencement of Messiah's kingdom: kings, rulers, priests, and people, all conspired and raged against him. Herod and Pilate, the Jewish elders and the Roman soldiers, the Pharisees and the Sadducees thus differed, and thus agreed. They hated each other till he appeared; but their greater common hatred to him made them act in concert, and they suspended their mutual animosity, that they might combine to destroy him.

I may seem to have digressed from the immediate scope of my text, but I judge it proper to bring the subject home to yourselves. If I confined myself to prove that the enemies of our Lord, when he was upon earth, were very unreasonable and unjust in treating him as they did, I should have an easy task, and I suppose, the ready assent of all my hearers. But there may be persons present, who, though they little suspect themselves, are equally misled by prejudices; and under a semblance of zeal for a form of godliness, oppose the truth and power of it, upon the same principles and in the same spirit as the Jews and Heathens did of old. The Jews who condemned Messiah to death, blamed their forefathers for persecuting the prophets who foretold his appearance, (Matt. xxiii. 30, 31;) but their own conduct towards him was a proof, that had they lived in the days of the prophets, they would have acted as their fathers had done. So the resentment that many, who bear the Christian name in this day, discover against the doctrines of the gospel, and against the people who profess them, is a proof that they would have concurred with those who crucified the Lord of glory, had they lived in Jerusalem at that time.

In this prophecy, David, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, speaks of the future as actually present. He saw the resistance that would be made to the person and kingdom of Messiah by the powers of the world; that they would employ their force and policy to withstand and suppress the decree and appointment of God. The question, Why? implies that their opposition would be both groundless and ineffectual.

1. It was entirely groundless and unreasonable. Messiah was indeed a King, and he came to set up a kingdom that should endure for ever. But his kingdom is not of this world; and, if rightly understood, would give no umbrage to human governments. It does not interfere with the rights of princes. His subjects are indeed primarily bound by the laws of their immediate King, and they must obey God rather than man, (Acts. v. 39,) if man will presume to enjoin such laws as contradict his known will. But with this exception, it is a part of the duty they owe to their Lord, to obey those whom he has placed, by his providence, in authority over them. The kingdom of Messiah has little to do with what we call politics. His people are taught to render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, (Matt. xxii. 21,) and to yield a peaceful subjection to the powers that be, under whatever form of government their lot may be cast. They are strangers and pilgrims upon earth,

(1 Pet. ii. 11,) their citizenship, treasures, and conversation, are in heaven; and they have no more direct concern with the intrigues and parties of politicians, than a traveller has in the feuds and disturbances which may happen in a foreign country through which he is passing. They are to obey God, they are to obey kings and governors in subordination to God; they are to render to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute, custom to whom custom, honour to whom honour, Rom. xiii. 1—7. But where they cannot comply with the laws of government without breaking the laws of God, then they are not to obey, but to suffer patiently, committing their cause to him whom they serve; well knowing that he is able to protect or relieve them, so far as his wisdom judges it fit, and to make them abundant amends for all they can suffer for his sake. I am not a direct advocate for the doctrines of passive obedience and non-resistance in the largest sense. I set a great value upon the blessings of civil and religious liberty, I reverence the constitutional rights of nations, particularly of our own. But they are all dependant upon the will of our Lord; and I know not by what means they can be preserved to a people, when their sins have made them ripe for judgment. But let the dead bury their dead, Matt. viii. 22. God will never want instruments, when it is his pleasure to relieve the oppressed, or to abase the proud. For these purposes, he over-rules the councils and affairs of men, pours contempt upon the designs of princes, and takes the wise in their own craftiness. The subjects of his spiritual kingdom have only to commit their cause to him, to wait upon him, to observe and to admire his management. Their best interest is always safe. And even the troubles they meet with, are appointed for their good. But if they so far conform to the world, as to take an active and decided part in the disputes and contentions around them, they usually dishonour their christian character, and obstruct their own peace and comfort. There may be possibly some exceptions. God may sometimes place a servant of his, by the leading of his providence, in a post of high political importance, as he did Joseph and Daniel, but I believe such instances are few; and if any venture of their own accord beyond the proper line of their calling as christians, the event is usually grief and loss to them. They are described in his word, as those who are quiet in the land, (Psalm xxxv. 20,) and such should be their deportment.

We are sure it was thus, in the first and golden days of christianity. The Roman government was then absolute, arbitrary, and oppressive. Tiberius, Caligula, Nero, and others who presided over it, and bore the name of Roman emperors, were beyond measure vile and abominable: one of them was, by a decree of the Roman senate, sentenced to death as a public enemy to mankind; but the Christians neither disputed their right, nor disobeyed their authority. Kings and rulers, therefore, have nothing to fear from the gospel of Christ. The maxims of sound policy would engage all their influence in facilitating its progress; for true christians will assuredly be good subjects. Impatience of subordination, contempt of lawful authority, tumults, riots, and conspiracies, are evils which would have no place if the gospel was generally received. But princes have been usually exposed to the flattery of designing men, who, by their arts and misrepresentations, have seduced them to act contrary to their true interests. Their mistaken efforts to suppress that cause, which, if maintained, would have been the best security of their thrones, have often stained the annals of their reign with innocent blood, and filled their dominions with misery. History furnishes many instances of kings, who might otherwise have lived beloved, and died lamented, that have involved themselves and their families in the calamities with which they unjustly punished those who deserved their protection. For,

2. Opposition to Messiah and his kingdom is no less vain and ineffectual, than unreasonable and groundless. Nor is it vain only, but ruinous to those who engage in it. What did the Jews build when they rejected the foundation-stone which God had laid in Zion? They acted, as they thought, with precaution and foresight. They said, "If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and our nation," John xi. 48. Foolish politicians! Did they preserve their city by crucifying the Son of God? The very evil they feared came upon them. Or rather, being abandoned of God to their own counsels, they brought it upon themselves. In a few years the Romans, with whom they appeared so desirous to keep upon good terms, destroyed their city with an unheard-of destruction, and exterminated them from the land. This was an emblem of the inevitable, total, irreparable ruin, which awaits all those who persist in rejecting the rule of Messiah. The nation, the individual, that will not serve him, must surely perish.

Ah! if sinners did but know what the bonds and cords are, which they are so determined to break; if they knew that his service is perfect freedom; if they were aware what more dreadful bonds and chains they are rivetting upon themselves, by refusing his easy yoke, they would throw down their arms and submit. They think, if they yield to the gospel, they must bid adieu to pleasure. But what will become of their pleasure, when, the day of his forbearance being expired, he will speak to them in his wrath, and fill them with hopeless horror and dismay?

Bless the Lord, ye favoured few, whose eyes are opened, whose hearts are softened, and who are become the willing people of this Saviour. Yet a little while, and he will appear again, and then you also shall appear with him in glory!

SERMON XXXIV.

OPPOSITION TO MESSIAH IN VAIN.

He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision. Psalm ii. 4.

THE extent and efficacy of the depravity of mankind, cannot be fully estimated by the conduct of Heathens destitute of divine revelation. We may say of the gospel, in one sense, what the apostle says of the law, "It entered that sin might abound," Rom. v. 20. It afforded occasion for displaying the alienation of the heart of man from the blessed God in the strongest light. The sensuality, oppression, and idolatry which have prevailed in all ages, sufficiently prove the wickedness of men to be very great. But the opposition which they who have rebelled against the government of their Creator, make to the proposals of his grace, is a proof still more striking. If sin has so hardened their hearts, and blinded their eyes, that of themselves they neither can nor will implore his mercy; yet it might be thought that if the great God, whom they have so heinously offended, should be pleased, of his own goodness, to make the first overtures of reconciliation, and to invite them to receive pardon, they would gladly attend to his gracious declaration; especially when they are informed, that to preserve them from perishing, he gave up his only Son to sufferings and death. But when they not only defy his power, but insult his goodness; when they reject and blaspheme the Saviour whom he commends to them; when they are but the more exasperated by his tenders of mercy; when they scorn his message, and persecute his messengers by whom he intreats them to be reconciled; this mad and ungrateful carriage shows such a rooted enmity against God in fallen men, as even the fallen angels are not capable of discovering. For Messiah took not on him the nature of angels, nor did he make proposals of mercy to them. But he did take upon him our nature. He visited us in person, for us he lived a sufferer, and died that we might live. The prophets foresaw and foretold the reception he would meet with, and their predictions were fulfilled. The Jews who professed to expect him, and the Heathens who had not heard of him, united their utmost efforts to withstand and defeat the purposes of his unexampled love. What must the holy angels think of the baseness, presumption, and obstinacy of such creatures!

But rebellion against God is not only wickedness, but folly and infatuation in the extreme. "Who ever hardened himself against the Lord and prospered?" Job x. 4. He whom they opposed, and against whom they thought they had prevailed when they saw him dead upon the cross, soon resumed his glory and his throne. The text therefore principally respects the opposition made to his gospel and to his kingdom after his ascension, which is still carrying on, but which always was, and always will be in vain. The words I have read offer two points for the consolation of those who love him, and for the timely consideration of those who have hitherto disregarded him.

I. That he sitteth in the heavens.

II. The notice he taketh of his enemies; he smiles at their rage, and treats both their power and their policy with contempt.

I. He whom God has anointed, (therefore called Messiah,) he against whom kings and rulers, nations and the people rage, sitteth in the heavens. He has finished his great work, and entered into his rest; having by himself purged our sins, he is immovably seated on his throne, at the right hand of the majesty on high, Heb. i. 3. He is the Head, King, and Lord of principalities, dominions, and powers, possessed of all authority, unchangeably fixed over all, God blessed for evermore, Rom. ix. 5. In this character he is the Representative, High-Priest, Advocate, and Shepherd of all who put their trust in him. He is ever mindful of them. While he is preparing a place for them near himself, by the power of his Spirit, he maintains an intercourse with them, and manifests himself to them as he does not to the world. By his providence, which ruleth over all, he manages their concerns upon earth, supplies their wants, and gives them present and effectual help and support in their time of trouble. To him their eyes and hearts are directed. they look to him and are enlightened, (Psal. xxxiv. 5,) strengthened, and comforted. And under his protection they are safe. He having taken charge of them, and engaged to save them to the uttermost, no weapon formed against them can prosper. Now they may draw nigh to God with boldness, for they have one who ever liveth to make intercession for them. Now they may lay aside all anxious, uneasy cares, for they have a mighty Friend who careth for them. Now they may say, each one for himself, "I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength, and my song, and my salvation," Is. xii. 2. Whether you have indeed fled to him for refuge as the hope set before you, committed your soul to him, and accepted him in all his offices, as your Prophet, Priest, and King, is a point of experience; if

you have, he knows it, for he enabled you to do it; and he will not disappoint the hope and expectation which he himself has wrought in you. If you have, methinks you must know it likewise. Have you not done it more than once? Do you not daily repeat this surrender of yourself to him? It is certainly possible to assent to the truths of the gospel, considered merely as doctrines or propositions, yea, to plead and dispute for them with much seeming earnestness, and yet to be entirely a stranger to their power. But I trust that they to whom I now speak will understand me. Our Lord reminded Nathanael of what had passed under the fig-tree, (John i. 48,) when he thought himself alone. Do not I remind you of seasons, when no eye but the eye of Him who seeth in secret was upon you? Did not you then and there, once and again, accept him as your Saviour upon the warrant of his own word, devote yourselves to his service, resign yourselves to his disposal, and entrust yourselves to his care? Then fear not. He that sitteth in the heavens is on your side. If the premises be well grounded, the inference is sure. And though many may rise up against you, they shall not prevail; for he will teach your hands to war, and your fingers to fight, will cover your head in the day of battle, and in the end make you more than conquerors. For the battle is not yours, but the Lord's. Your enemies are his, and his cause is yours. They who associate against him shall be dashed in pieces, as the billows break and die upon a rocky shore.

II. The feebleness and insignificance of their rage against Messiah, is intimated by the manner in which he notices their proceedings; he holds them in derision, he laughs them to scorn. He has them perfectly under his control, holds them in a chain when they think themselves most at liberty, appoints the bounds beyond which they cannot pass, and can in a moment check them, and make them feel his hook and bridle, when in the height of their career.

It is the Lord's pleasure not only to favour and to support his people, but to do it in such a way that it may appear to be wholly his own work, and that the praise belongs to him alone. And therefore he permits their enemies for a season to try if they can prevent his designs. For a season, things take such a course that their attempts seem to prosper; they threaten, they boast, and confidently expect to carry their point. But the contest always issues in their shame and confusion. He not only disconcerts their schemes, but makes them instrumental to the promoting of his own designs. Thus when he sent Moses to deliver Israel from Egypt, Pharaoh, instead of complying with his command, increased their burdens, added to the rigour of their bondage, and though rebuked by a succession of severe judgments, he hardened himself the more, and was determined to detain them if he could. But he could not detain them a day or an hour beyond the appointed time which God had long before made known to Abraham, Exod. xii. 41, 42. Then they were delivered, and Pharaoh and his host overthrown in the Red Sea. Hereby the name of the God of Israel was more known, noticed, and magnified, than it would have been, if Pharaoh had dismissed the people without reluctance or delay.

In like manner, when Messiah left the earth, his followers were considered as sheep without a shepherd. The world conspired to suppress his cause, and to root out the remembrance of his people. But the methods they employed counteracted their own designs. They who were dispersed by the persecution that followed the death of Stephen, preached the word wherever they went; the gospel spread from place to place, and the number of disciples daily increased. So that the Jewish rulers soon found themselves unequal to the task, and foreboded their own disappointment, doubting whereunto these things would grow, Acts v. 24. In some cases the Lord signally interposed, and showed how entirely the lives and the hearts of his adversaries were in his hands. The haughty Herod was suddenly smitten by an invisible hand, with a loathsome and mortal disease, Acts xii. 23. He fell, devoured by worms; but the success of the gospel, which he had presumed to withstand, greatly increased and spread. The furious zeal of Saul of Tarsus, (Acts ix.) against the truth, was silenced in a different manner. Jesus, whom he ignorantly persecuted, appeared to him in the way to Damascus, when he was breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples, disarmed his rage, made him a monument of his mercy, and an earnest and successful preacher of the faith which he had laboured to destroy.

From the Jews, the business was transferred to the Heathens, whose opposition was no less unavailing. Though they sometimes affected to boast that they had suppressed the Christian name, the gospel was propagated in defiance of their attempts to prevent it. The worst and the best of the Roman emperors were alike industrious, and alike unsuccessful, in their endeavours to stifle the work of God. At length, in the reign of Constantine, the Christian religion obtained the sanction and protection of imperial authority.

But it soon appeared that the religion of the New Testament gained little advantage by this revolution. Though the worship of heathen idols gradually declined, and sunk into disrepute, the bulk of the people of all ranks were only changed in name. The world still lay in wickedness, (1 John v. 19,) and true Christianity was still exposed to

persecution. When the name of Christian ceased to be invidious and despicable, new names were soon invented to stigmatize the real servants of God; and ecclesiastical power gradually increased, till the mystery of iniquity reigned for ages in the temple of God. The persecutions of Popery equalled and exceeded those of Paganism. And they who aspired to be Christians indeed, were constrained, like the worthies of old, to wander on mountains and in deserts, to hide themselves in dens and caves of the earth, Heb. xi. 38. Yet, under all disadvantages, there was still a remnant, according to the election of grace, who could not be compelled to wear the mark of the beast. And while persecutors, who could only kill the body, seemed to weaken the church militant, they increased the number and the songs of the church triumphant.

To appearance the church of Christ was often brought low. It was very low at the time of the Reformation. But then it suddenly was revived, and broke forth like the sun from behind a dark cloud; and the light of the gospel was diffused far and wide, almost as at the beginning, in the apostles' days. But Protestants were quickly actuated by the same spirit as their Popish and Pagan predecessors had been. The form of Christianity was professed and protected, and the power of it denied and opposed. And to this day it remains a truth verified by experience, that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus, must, in one way or other, suffer persecution, 1 Tim. iii. 12.

Of late years the sanguinary spirit, which, under pretence of doing God service, destroyed his people by fire and tortures, is much subsided. We live in a time when great pretences are made to candour and moderation. We have reason to be thankful for our religious liberty, to the good providence of God. But so far as men are concerned, we are not indebted for it, to a just sense and acknowledgment of the right of private judgment, but to the prevalence of sceptical indifference and infidelity. The religion of the gospel was, perhaps, never more despised and hated than at present. We seem to be returning apace to the state of the primitive ages, when there were but two sorts of persons, Christians and infidels. But notwithstanding all the arts and assaults of men, whether open enemies or pretended friends the Bible is still extant, the gospel is still preached, yea, is still spreading. The Lord has always had a people, though they have been often hidden from the general notice and observation of men. He that sitteth in the heavens laughs his opposers to scorn, and maintains his own cause in defiance of them all.

Surely if this work was not of God, the united efforts of kings, councils, popes, philosophers, the great, the wise, the decent, and the profligate, must have overthrown it long ago. If a miracle be demanded in proof of christianity, behold one! Though the world has been raging and plotting against it, from its first appearance; though it has been fiercely assaulted by those without, and shamefully betrayed by many within, it still subsists, it still flourishes. And subsist it shall, for it is maintained by him who has the hearts of all men in his hands, and can control or change them as he pleases. He can, and he will, support and strengthen his people under all their sufferings. He can disappoint his adversaries by unexpected events, divide them among themselves, and so manage them by his providence, as to make them protect and promote the very cause which they hate. And whenever he pleases, he can, as it were, from the stones, (Matth. iii. 9,) raise up instruments to carry on his work, and to show forth his praise. Therefore,

1. Let not his people tremble for the ark. Our eyes indeed should affect our hearts. It becomes us to be jealous for the Lord of hosts, to be concerned for the contempt and dishonour that is cast upon his government and grace, to be grieved for the abounding abominations of the day, and to pity and pray for obstinate sinners who know not what they do. But we need not fear the failure of his promise. His truth and honour are engaged for the success of his gospel, and they must stand or fall together. It is a cause dearer to him than it can be to us. The manifestation of his glory in the salvation of sinners, by the doctrine of the cross, is the one great concern, for which the succession of day and night, and of the seasons of the year, is continued, and the visible frame of nature is preserved. He will work, and none shall let it. The kingdoms of the earth shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ. The fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, and the dispersed of Israel shall return to the Lord their God, and be saved. These great events, to those who judge by an eye of sense, and according to the present state of things, may appear improbable or impossible. But the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back? Is. xiv. 27.

2. Think it neither strange nor hard, if any of you are called to suffer for the sake of the truth. Think it not strange; for thus it has been from the beginning. Think it not hard; for our sufferings are small, if compared with the lot of many who have lived before us. We are not called to resist unto blood. Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see such days of liberty as we are favoured with, but have not seen them.

3. Consider seriously, Who is on the Lord's

side? His is the strongest side, and must prevail. If you have yielded yourselves to him, and taken upon you his yoke, your best interests are safe, your final happiness is secured. Nothing can separate you from his love. You shall be kept by his power through faith, and no weapon formed against you shall prosper. But if you are against him, tremble, for the day of his wrath will come; "it will burn like an oven, and all the proud, and all that do wickedly, shall be as stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, and shall leave them neither root nor branch," Mal. iv. 1. Turn therefore in time from your evil ways, submit yourselves unto him, and implore his mercy while he waiteth to be gracious, that iniquity may not be your ruin.

SERMON XXXV.

OPPOSITION TO MESSIAH RUINOUS.

Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Psalm ii. 9.

THERE is a species of the sublime in writing, which seems peculiar to the scripture, and of which, properly, no subjects but those of divine revelation are capable. With us, things inconsiderable in themselves are elevated by splendid images, which give them an apparent importance beyond what they can justly claim. Thus the poet, when describing a battle among bees, by a judicious selection of epithets and figures, excites in the minds of his readers the idea of two mighty armies contending for empire. But the works and ways of God are too great in themselves to admit of any heightening representation. We conceive more forcibly of small things by illustrations borrowed from those which are greater; but the scripture frequently illustrates great things, by contrasting them with those which in our estimation are trivial and feeble. One instance, out of many which might be mentioned, is that truly sublime passage of the prophet: "And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; and all their host shall fall down as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig-tree," Isa. xxxiv. 4. The apostle, when favoured with a heavenly vision, introduces the same thought, almost in the same words: "And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind: and the heavens departed as a scroll when it is rolled together," Rev. vi. 13, 14. Such forms of expression are becoming the Majesty of the great God, before whom the difference between the great and the small in our judgment, is annihilated. In his view, the earth, with all its inhabitants, are but as a drop which falls unnoticed from the bucket, or as the dust which cleaves to the balance, (Is. xl. 15,) without affecting its equilibrium. At the same time, the simplicity of these illustrations, so well suited to confound the pride of the wise, is striking and obvious to the lowest capacities. If Homer or Virgil had been to describe the exertion and effect of the power of God, in subduing and punishing his enemies, they would probably have laboured for a simile sufficiently grand. But I much question if they would have thought of the image in my text, though none can be more expressive of utter irreparable ruin, or of the ease with which it is accomplished: He shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

The series of the passages we have lately considered is very regular and beautiful. Messiah ascended on high, and received gifts for men. The first and immediate consequence of his exaltation in our nature, is the publication of the gospel. Then follows the happy and beneficial influence of the gospel on those who thankfully receive it. How beautiful are the feet of them that preach these glad tidings! The next passage secures and describes its extensive progress—the sound went forth into all the earth. The opposition awakened by it is then described, First, as unreasonable—Why do the Heathen rage? Secondly, as ineffectual—the Lord laughs at his opposers; he sits upon his immovable throne, and derides their attempts. Thirdly, the final issue of their mad resistance, their confusion and ruin, is the subject of the verse I have read, which prepares for the close of the second part of the Oratorio. His enemies shall perish, his kingdom shall be established and consummated. And then all holy intelligent beings shall join in a song of triumph, "Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

The two expressions, of breaking with a rod of iron, and dashing in pieces, suggest nearly the same idea. But as elsewhere he is said to rule his enemies with a rod of iron, (Rev. xix. 15,) I shall avail myself of this variation, in order to give you a more complete view of the dreadful state of those who oppose Messiah and his kingdom. He rules them at present with a rod of iron, and hereafter he will dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Let us therefore consider,

I. How the Lord Messiah rules over impenitent and obstinate sinners in the present life. They attempt (in vain) to withdraw from his subjection; they oppose his holy will; they refuse to submit to his golden sceptre: he will therefore rule them with a rod of iron. For though they boast of their liberty, and presume to say, Who is Lord

over us? (Psalm xii. 4,) yet in the thing wherein they speak proudly, he is above them, (Exod. xviii. 11.) They cannot hide themselves from his notice, nor avoid the intimations of his displeasure.

1. One branch of his iron rule over them, consists in that certain and inseparable connexion which he has established between sin and misery. The fruit of righteousness is peace, James iii. 18. They who live in the fear of the Lord, and yield a willing obedience to his word, not only possess peace of conscience, and a hope which can look with comfort beyond the grave, but are thereby preserved from innumerable evils, into which they who attempt to cast off his yoke unavoidably plunge themselves. On the contrary, the way of transgressors is hard, Prov. xiii. 15. It is hard in itself, if we set aside for a moment the consideration of the dreadful end to which it leads. Could you see what passes within the breast of a man who disdains to be governed by the rule of God's word, you would see his heart torn to pieces by the clamorous, insatiable demands of the various, violent, inconsistent appetites and passions, which, like so many wild beasts, are continually preying upon him. Not one of them can be fully gratified, much less all, for many of them are diametrically opposite to each other. The boilings of anger, the gnawings of envy, the thirst of covetousness, the anxieties attendant on pride and ambition, must make the mind that is subject to them miserable. There is no peace to the wicked; there can be none. Farther, their evil tempers and irregular desires produce outward and visible effects, which publicly and manifestly prove, that the service of sin is a hard drudgery, and that whatever pleasure it may seem to promise, its pay is misery and pain. "Who hath woe, contentions, and wounds without cause?" (Prov. xxiii. 29.) The drunkard. Lewdness and drunkenness are high roads, if I may so speak, leading to infamy, disease, penury, and death. Such persons do not live out half the days which their constitutions might have afforded, if they had not sold themselves to do wickedly. Again, look into their houses. Where the Lord does not dwell, peace will not inhabit. How frequently may we observe, in their family-connexions, discord and enmity between man and wife, unkind parents, disobedient children, tyrannical masters, and treacherous servants! Thus they live, hateful in themselves, and hating one another, Tit. iii. 2. If they have what the world accounts prosperity, their hard master Satan, so works upon their evil dispositions, that they can derive no real comfort from it. Every day, almost every hour, puts some new bitterness into their cup. And in trouble they have no resource: having no access to God, no promise to support them, no relief from him against their anxieties and fears, they either sink down in sullen, comfortless despondency, or in a spirit of wild rebellion, blaspheme him because of their plagues, Rev. xvi. 21. In society they are dreaded and avoided by the sober and serious, and can only associate with such as themselves. There indeed, they will pretend to be happy; they carouse, and make a noise, and assist each other to banish reflection; yet frequently the drink, or the devil, breaks their intimacies, and stirs them up to quarrels, broils, and mischief. Such is a life of sin. The Lord rules them with a rod of iron. They renounce his fear, and he refuses them his blessing. Nothing more is necessary to render them miserable than to leave them to themselves.

2. He rules them with a rod of iron, by his power over conscience. They may boast and laugh, but we know the gall and bitterness of their state; for we, likewise, were in it, until the Lord delivered us. Let them say what they will, we are sure that there are seasons, when, like him whom they serve, they believe and tremble, James ii. 19. They cannot always be in company, they cannot always be intoxicated; though this is the very reason why many intoxicate themselves so often, because they cannot bear their own thoughts when sober. They are then a burden and a terror to themselves. They feel the iron rod. How awful are the thoughts which sometimes awaken them, or keep them awake, in the silent hours of the night! What terrors seize them in sickness, or when they are compelled to think of death! What a death-warrant do they often receive in their souls, under the preaching of that word of God which fills his people with joy and peace! Many will not hear it. But why not? They will not, because they dare not. I am persuaded there are more than a few of the brave spirits of the present day, who would willingly change conditions with a dog, and be glad to part with their reason, if they could at the same time get rid of the horrors which hunt their consciences. Is there one such person here? Let me entreat you to stop and consider, before it be too late. There is yet forgiveness with God. Your case, though dangerous, is not desperate, if you do not make it so yourself. I would direct your thoughts to Jesus. Look to him, and implore his mercy His blood can cleanse from all sin. He *is* able to save to the uttermost.

It is possible some may affect to contradict the representation I have made, and be ready to say, "I find nothing of all this. I take a pleasure in my way. I have a healthy body, money at my command, and I can sleep soundly. I feel none of the qualms of conscience you speak of; and though the saints and good folks care as little for me as I do for them, yet I am very well and happy with

sueh aequaintance as I like best. As to an hereafter, I do not think of it; but I am determined to live now." In answer to sentiments of this kind, whieh I am afraid are too common, I observe,

3. That the amazing hardness and blindness of heart to whieh some sinners are given up, is another, and the most terrible effect of that iron rod with which the Lord rules his enemies. Pharaoh could say as positively as you, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?" Exod. v. 2. But because, being often rebuked, he persisted in his obstinacy, the contest terminated in his destruetion. If you are obstinate like him now, I believe you were not always so. You must have laboured hard, you must have resisted the light of truth, and have stifled many a conviction, before you could arrive to this pitch of obduracy. You have fought against the Holy Spirit; and woe unto you, if he be gone, gone for ever, and will strive with you no more. To be thus given up of God to a reprobate mind, is the heaviest judgment that a sinner can be visited with on this side of hell. I am at a loss what to say to a person thus disposed, and I hope there are none such present. But I would warn those, who, though they have sinned with a high hand, are not yet altogether past feeling, lest you fall into sueh a state of confirmed disobedienee and unbelief. Take heed lest you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, Heb. iii. 13. If under the light of the gospel you can go on in a course of wilful, wanton, deliberate wickedness, you are upon the very edge of the unpardonable sin, of that state from whieh it is impossible to renew you to repentance. If the Bible be, as you vainly wish it may prove, a cunningly-devised fable, you may trample upon it with impunity, and laugh on securely to the end of life. But if it be true, remember you have been this day warned of the consequences of despising it. If you will perish, I am clear of your blood.

II. I proceed to consider the final issue of this unequal contest between the worms of the earth and their Maker. He will dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Sueh a vessel may be curiously wrought, and appear beautiful to the eye, but it is frail, easily broken, and, when once broken to pieces, it is irreparable. It is therefore a fit emblem of mortal man in his best estate. We are fearfully and wonderfully made, Psal. cxxxix. 14. The texture of the human frame is admirable. The natural capacities of the mind of man, the powers of his understanding, will, and affections, the rapidity of imagination, the comprehension of memory, especially in some instances, are so many proofs, that, considered as a creature of God, he is a noble creature; and though he is debased and degraded by sin, there are traces of his original excellenee remaining, sufficient to denominate him in the words of the poet, "majestic though in ruins." But if you suppose him rich, powerful, wise, in the common sense of the words, he is brittle as a potter's vessel, and while possessed of every possible advantage, he is but like the grass or the flower of the field, which, in its most flourishing state, falls in a moment at the stroke of the scythe, and withers, and dies. A fever, a fall, a tile, a grain of sand, or the air that finds its way through a crevice, may be an overmatch for the strongest man, and bring him down hastily to the grave. By a small change in the brain, or some part of the nervous system, he who now prides himself in his intellectual abilities may soon become a lunatic or an idiot. Disease may quickly render the beauty loathsome, and the robust weak as infancy. There are earthen or china vessels, which might possibly endure for many ages, if carefully preserved from violence. But the seeds of decay and death are sown in our very frame. We are crushed before the moth, and moulder away untouched under the weight of time. How surely and inevitably, then, must they whom the Lord strikes with his iron rod, be shattered with the blow!

Communities and collective bodies of men, are, in his hand, no less frail than individuals. The first-born throughout Egypt, and the vast army of Sennacherib, perished in a night. The Romans were the iron rod in his hand, wherewith he dashed the Jewish nation to pieces. Their fragments are scattered far and wide to this day, and who can gather them up? The Roman empire was likewise dashed to pieces in its turn; and such has been the end, successively, of many powers, and of many persons who have presumed to oppose his designs. For a while they were permitted to rage, and plot, and strive; but at length they stumbled and fell, and their memory is perished.

But it is proper to bring the consideration nearer home. I have been informed, that the music to which this passage is set, is so well adapted to the idea that it expresses, as in a manner to startle those who hear it. They who live in sinful habits, regardless of the gospel, would be startled, indeed, if they were duly sensible how directly the words apply to their own situation, and that the psalmist describes the manner in whieh God will treat them, if they continue impenitent. If we could see all that passes upon dying beds, we should often see the false peace and vain hopes of sinners dashed to pieces when eternity is opening upon their view. We shall certainly see the solemnity of the great day: "For we must all appear" not only as spectators, but as parties nearly interested in the proceedings, "before the judgment-seat of Christ." "Behold, he cometh in the clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him!" He will descend with a shout, with

the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and before him shall be gathered all nations. Where then shall the sinner and the ungodly appear? What will then become of those who despise, and those who abuse the gospel of the grace of God? The libertine, the infidel, the apostate, the hypocrite, the profane scoffer, and the false professor, how will they stand, or whither will they flee, when the great Judge shall sit upon his awful throne, and the books shall be opened, and every secret thing shall be disclosed! Alas for them that are full, and that laugh now, for then they shall pine and mourn, Luke vi. 25. Then their cavils will be silenced, their guilt, with all its aggravations, be charged home upon them, and no plea, no advocate be found. Can their hearts endure, or their hands be strong, when he shall speak to them in his wrath, and say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels?"

But let them who love his name rejoice. You have fled for refuge to the hope set before you. To you his appearance will be delightful, and his voice welcome. You shall not be ashamed. This awful God is yours. He will then own and accept you before assembled worlds, and will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." Then the days of your mourning shall be ended, and your sun shall go down no more, Matt. xxv. 34. Is. lx. 20.

SERMON XXXVI.

THE LORD REIGNETH.

Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth! Rev. xix. 6.

THE book of the Revelation, being chiefly prophetical, will not perhaps be fully understood, till the final accomplishment of the events shall draw near, and throw a stronger light upon the whole series. But while the learned commentators have been hitherto divided and perplexed in their attempts to illustrate many parts of it, there are other parts well adapted for the instruction and refreshment of plain christians; particularly those passages in which the scenery and images seemed designed to give us some representation of the happiness and worship of the heavenly state. Thus a plain unlettered believer, when reading with attention the fourth and fifth chapters, though he cannot give a reason why the elders are four-and-twenty, the living creatures four, and the number of their wings neither more nor less than six; yet, from the whole description of the Lamb upon the throne, the songs of the redeemed, and the chorus of the angels, he receives such an impression of glory, as awakens his gratitude, desire, and joy, and excites him likewise to take up the same song of praise, to him who has loved him, and washed him from his sins in his own blood. He is content to leave the discussion of hard questions to learned men, while he feeds by faith upon those simple truths which can only be relished by a spiritual taste; and which, where there is such a taste, make their way to the heart, without the assistance of critical disquisition.

The subject of the preceding chapter, is the destruction of mystical Babylon, the head of the opposition against the kingdom of the Lord Christ. But Babylon sinks like a millstone in the mighty ocean, and is no more found. So must all his enemies perish. The catastrophe of Babylon, like that of Pharaoh at the Red Sea, is beheld by the saints and servants of the Lord with admiration, and furnishes them with a theme for a song of triumph to his praise. This may be properly styled sacred music indeed. It is commanded, inspired, and regulated, by the Lord himself. The performers are all interested in the subject, they who fear God, and are devoted to his service and glory. And though persons of this character are comparatively few upon earth, hidden, and in a manner lost, among the crowd of mankind, they will be, when brought together at last, a very large company. Their united voices are here compared to the voice of many waters, and of mighty thunders, and this is the solemn close, the chorus of their song, "Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

The impression which the performance of this passage in the Oratorio usually makes upon the audience is well known. But however great the power of music may be, should we even allow the flights of poetry to be truth, that it can soften rocks, and bend the knotty oak, one thing we are sure it cannot do; it cannot soften and change the hard heart, it cannot bend the obdurate will of man. If all the people who successively hear the Messiah, who are struck and astonished, for the moment, by this chorus in particular, were to bring away with them an abiding sense of the importance of the sentiment it contains, the nation would soon wear a new face. But do the professed lovers of sacred music, in this enlightened age, generally live, as if they really believed that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth? Rather do not the greater part of them live, as they might do if they were sure of the contrary? as if they were satisfied to a demonstration, that either there is no God, or that his providence is not concerned in human affairs? I appeal to conscience; I appeal to fact.

I apprehend that this passage, taken in the strictest sense, refers to a period not yet ar-

rived. Babylon is not yet fallen. The servants of God in the present day, will most probably fulfil their appointed time upon earth, like those who have lived before them, in a state of conflict. They must endure the cross, and sustain opposition for his sake. The people who shall live when the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ, when the nations shall learn war no more, are yet unborn. But even now we may rejoice that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, and that Jesus is King of kings, and Lord of lords. I must consider my text as referring to him. Many of the Heathens believed that God reigned. The christian doctrine is, that the Lord God omnipotent exerciseth his dominion and government in the person of Christ. "The Father loveth the Son, and hath committed all things into his hands," John iii. 35. And thus our Lord, after his resurrection, assured his disciples, "All power is committed unto me in heaven and in earth," Matt. xxviii. 18. He has already taken to himself his great power and reigneth. His right of reigning over all is essential to his divine nature; but the administration of government in the nature of man, is the effect and reward of his obedience unto death. But in the union of both natures, he is one person, Christ Jesus the Lord. All the riches and fulness of the Godhead, all the peculiar honours of the Mediator, centre in him. They may be distinguished, but they are inseparable.

Happy are they who can, upon solid and scriptural grounds, exult in the thought that the Lord reigneth, and can make his government the subject of their hallelujahs and praises! Happy they, who see, acknowledge, and admire, his management in the kingdom of providence, and are the willing subjects of his kingdom of grace. Let us take a brief survey of his reigning glory in these kingdoms.

I. Great and marvellous is this Lord God omnipotent in his kingdom of universal providence! His mighty arm sustains the vast fabric of the universe. He upholds the stars in their courses. If we attentively consider their multitude, their magnitudes, their distances from us and from each other, and the amazing swiftness, variety, and regularity of their motions, our minds are overwhelmed, our thoughts confounded, by the vastness and the wonders of the scene. But he spoke them into being, and they are preserved in their stations and revolutions by his power and agency. If we fix our thoughts upon the earth, though in comparison of the immensity of his creation it is but as a point or a grain of sand, it is the object of his incessant care. All its various inhabitants derive their existence and their support from him. He provides for the young ravens when unable to fly, and for the young lions that traverse the woods. The instinct of animals, whereby they are unerringly instructed in whatever concerns the welfare and preservation of their species, so vastly exceeding the boasted wisdom of man, that he can neither imitate nor comprehend it, is communicated by him. He teaches the birds to build their nests, the spider to weave his web, and instructs the communities of bees, and insignificant emmets, to form their admirable policies and government among themselves. If we speak of intelligent beings, he does what he pleases in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. He directs and overrules the counsels and purposes of men, so that though they act freely, the event of all their different interfering schemes, is only the accomplishment of his purposes. When they are employed as his instruments, from small beginnings, and in defiance of difficulties apparently insuperable, they succeed beyond their own expectations. When unhappily engaged against his designs, in vain they rage and plot. He takes the wise in their own craftiness, pours contempt upon their power and policy, and all their great preparations melt like a mist, or like snow before the sun, and leave no trace behind. Still more wonderful, to the eye of faith, is his control over Satan and the powers of darkness. Whatever, for wise reasons, though unknown to us, he may permit them to do, they cannot with all their subtlety or strength, detain one soul in their bondage longer than till his appointed time of release; nor recover one soul back to their dominion, of which he is pleased to undertake the care. On the contrary, he breaks the heads of these leviathans in pieces, turns their counsels against themselves, and makes them instrumental in purifying his people, and extending his church, by the means they employ for the destruction of both. Thus they who dwell under his shadow are safe; for all things are in his power, and he always careth for them, and keepeth them, as the pupil of his eye; and therefore, though they are exercised with trials, and suffer many things for their good, his eye being always upon them, and his ear open to their prayer, they are supported, supplied, relieved, delivered, and at last made more than conquerors.

II. He has a peculiar kingdom, which he has established distinct from the kingdoms of this world, though diffused and extended among them, and which, in due time, like leaven, will pervade and assimilate them all to himself. This is the kingdom of the gospel, his church. It is founded upon a rock, and though the gates of hell continually war against it, they cannot prevail. For he is a wall of fire round about it, and the glory in the midst of it, Zech. ii. 5.

Here he reigns upon a throne of grace. He possesses and exercises unlimited authority

as a sovereign, to save whom he pleases, to pardon all manner of sins and offences, and to admit rebels and enemies, when they submit themselves and bow to his golden sceptre, into the number of his children and his friends. Seldom do the kings of the earth publish an act of grace in favour of those who have been guilty of rebellion, without clogging it with exceptions. Either they feel a resentment against some of the delinquents, which they have not magnanimity sufficient to conquer, or they dare not trust them. But his mercy is infinite; and he knows how to change their hearts when he pardons their sins.

Perhaps it may not be a digression wholly unuseful and impertinent, if I take this occasion to point out the several senses in which the word *Church* may be understood, agreeable to the scripture.

1. It denotes in the aggregate, the *mystical church*, the whole body of that spiritual kingdom, of which the Redeemer is the living and life-giving head, Col. i. 18. A succession of these has appeared upon earth in every age, from the days of righteous Abel, whom Cain slew; and we have reason to believe, that the far greater part of them are yet unborn. They will all be assembled together before the throne, in the great day of his final appearance, and inherit the kingdom of glory prepared for them. This is the church which God hath bought with his own blood, Acts xx. 28. Happy are they who belong to this society of the redeemed, whose names are written in heaven.

2. The *visible church* contains all those who bear and acknowledge the name of Christians, and who admit and enjoy the gospel-revelation. The church, in this sense, includes many nations. But it is a small thing to belong only to the visible church, for it is compared to a corn-floor, (Matt. iii. 12,) on which chaff is mingled with the wheat; to a field in which tares grow promiscuously with the good seed; to a fisher's net inclosing a great multitude of fishes both good and bad, Matt. xiii. 24, 47. But a time of discrimination will come. The chaff and the tares, and whatever is evil, will be consumed. Alas! what will it avail at last to say, "Lord, we have eaten and drank in thy presence," at thy table with thy true disciples, and "thou hast taught in our streets," (Luke xiii. 26, 27,) and we have heard in our own language of thy wonderful works, if you can say no more? My heart is pained with the apprehension, lest some of you have joined in the same public worship with true believers, have sat in the same seat, and lived in the same families, should at last see them, with whom you have been very nearly connected in this world, received into the kingdom of heaven, and you yourselves be shut out.

3. The *catholic church* in any one period, is that part of the visible church which is united to the Lord by a living faith. It comprises all who agree in the profession of the fundamental truths of the gospel, and whose conversation is regulated by its precepts; or in the apostle's words, "All who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," Eph. vi. 24. This catholic church, through the policy of Satan, and the deceitfulness of the heart, is too much divided against itself. Prejudice, bigotry, and remaining ignorance, greatly prevent that desirable union amongst true christians, which would promote their peace, comfort, and increase, and would contribute more than a thousand arguments to put their adversaries to shame and to silence. That shameful contention for denominations, parties, and favourite preachers, for which the apostle reproved the Corinthians, (1 Cor. iii. 4,) is still greatly to be lamented. But though they are too backward in acknowledging and assisting each other, the Lord is merciful to their weakness, and bears with them all. And as they grow in grace, and drink more into his Spirit, their hearts are enlarged, and they approach nearer to his pattern of long-suffering, patience, and tenderness.

4. The word *church* is applied to particular societies of christians, who are connected by a participation in the same ordinances of the gospel, and who maintain a scriptural separation from the sinful spirit and customs of the world. And though there may be pretenders among them, as there were among the apostolic churches, they are denominated by the better part. They belong to the catholic church by their profession of the truth; of course they are a part of the visible church; and those of them who are in deed and truth what they profess to be, are living members of the mystical church, to which all the promises are made. By whatever name they are known or distinguished among men, they are branches of the true vine, they have their fruit unto holiness, and their end, everlasting life. But to return,

In this his church, or spiritual kingdom, he rules by wise and gracious laws and ordinances. He releases his subjects from all authority, in point of conscience, but his own, and enjoins them to call no one master but himself, Matt. xxiii. 8—10. If they stand fast in the liberty wherewith he has made them free, (Gal. v. 1,) they will not give themselves up implicitly to the dictates of any man, nor follow him farther than he follows their Lord. And consequently, if they are influenced by his royal law of doing to others as they would that others should do unto them, they will not attempt to exert an undue authority, or wish to be called masters themselves, so as to assume a dogmatical carriage, or to expect a universal and absolute submission. But it must be owned that in our present state of

infirmity, this privilege is not sufficiently prized, nor this command duly complied with, there being scarcely a man who does not either arrogate too much to himself, or allow too much to others. A fault in the one or the other of these respects, may be assigned as a principal cause of most of the evils which deform the appearance, or injure the peace of the church. But the design of his gospel is to set his people at liberty from the yoke of men, from the fetters of custom and tradition, of superstition and will-worship; that they may enjoy in his service, a state of perfect freedom.

For it is the principal glory of his kingdom, that he reigns in the hearts of his people. There he writes his precepts, impresses his image, and erects his throne; ruling them, not merely by an outward law, but by an inward secret influence, breathing his own life and Spirit into them, so that their obedience becomes, as it were, natural, pleasurable, and its own reward. By the discoveries he affords them of his love, he wins their affections, captivates their wills, and enlightens their understandings. They derive from him the spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind, (2 Tim. i. 7,) and run with alacrity in the way of his commandments.

It is impossible therefore to make this song our own, and cordially to rejoice that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, unless we are the willing subjects of his government; unless we are really pleased with his appointed way of salvation, approve of his precepts, and, from a view of his wisdom and goodness, can cheerfully submit and resign ourselves to the disposal of his providence. In all these respects we are by nature at variance with him. We are too proud to be indebted to his grace, too wise in our own conceits to desire his instruction, too obstinately attached to the love and practice of sin, to be capable of relishing the beauty and spirituality of his commandments. And our love of the world, and the things of it, is too strong and grasping, to permit us to be satisfied with the lot, and with the dispensations he appoints for us. We wish, if possible, and as far as possible we attempt, to be our own carvers. We are unthankful when he bestows, impatient if he withholds, and if he sees fit to resume the gifts of which we are unworthy, we repine and rebel against his will. This enmity must be subdued, before we can be pleased with his government. In other words, we must be changed, we must be made new creatures. To produce this change, this new creation, the gospel is the only expedient; and when revealed and applied to the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit, the miracle is wrought. The sinner who is first convinced of his guilt and misery, and then reconciled to God by faith in the great atonement, willingly yields to his administration. He owns and feels the propriety of his proceedings, is ready to acknowledge, in his sharpest afflictions, that the Lord is gracious, and has not dealt with him according to the desert of his iniquities. He considers himself as no longer his own, but bought with a price, and brought under the strongest obligations to live no longer to himself, but to him who loved him, and gave himself for him. And what was before his dread and dislike, becomes now the joy of his heart, the thought, that the Lord reigneth, and that all his concerns are in the hands of him who doeth all things well.

Are there any among us, who say in their hearts, We will not have this Saviour to rule over us! The thought is no less vain than wicked. He must, he will reign, till he has subdued all enemies under his feet. You must either bend or break before him.

SERMON XXXVII.

THE EXTENT OF MESSIAH'S SPIRITUAL KINGDOM.

The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever. Rev. xi. 15.

THE kingdom of our Lord in the heart, and in the world, is frequently compared to a building or house, of which he himself is both the foundation and the architect, Isa. xxviii. 16; liv. 11, 12. A building advances by degrees, (1 Corinth. iii. 9. Ephes. ii. 20—22,) and while it is in an unfinished state, a stranger cannot, by viewing its present appearance, form an accurate judgment of the design, and what the whole will be when completed. For a time, the walls are of unequal height, it is disfigured by rubbish, which at the proper season will be taken away; and by scaffolding, which, though useful for carrying on the building, does not properly belong to it, but will likewise be removed when the present temporary service is answered. But the architect himself proceeds according to a determinate plan, and his idea of the whole work is perfect from the beginning. It is thus the Lord views his people in the present life. He has begun a good work in them, but as yet every part of it is imperfect and unfinished; and there are not only defects to be supplied, but deformities and incumbrances that must be removed. Many of the dispensations and exercises which contribute to form their religious character, do not properly belong to that work which is to abide, though they have a subserviency to promote it. When that which is perfect is come, the rest shall be don away.

And thus, although the growth and extent of his kingdom is the great scope and object of his providence, to which all the revolutions that take place in the kingdoms of this world shall be finally subservient; yet the steps by which he is carrying forward his design, are, for the most part, remote from the common apprehensions of mankind, and therefore seldom engage their attention. His kingdom, founded upon the Rock of ages, is building, advancing, and the gates of hell shall not be able to withstand its progress. Only detached and inconsiderable parts of the plan are as yet visible, and the beauties are everywhere obscured by attendant blemishes; but his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. Princes and statesmen seldom think of him, are seldom aware, that in prosecuting their own schemes, they are eventually fulfilling his purposes, and preparing the way to promote the cause which they despise, and often endeavour to suppress. But thus it is. Sometimes he employs them, more directly, as his instruments; and when they are thus engaged in his work, their success is secured. So Cyrus, whom Isaiah mentioned by name (Is. xlv. 1—5,) long before his birth, as the appointed deliverer of Israel from their captivity, prospered in his enterprises, being guided and girded by him whom he knew not, and established his own power upon the ruins of the Assyrian monarchy. The Roman empire likewise increased and prospered from small beginnings, that a way might be opened, in the proper season, for the destruction of the Jewish economy, and for facilitating the preaching of the gospel. And posterity will see, that the principal events of the present age, in Asia and America, have all a tendency to bring forward the accomplishment of my text; and are leading to one grand point, the spreading and establishment of the church and kingdom of our Lord. His plan is unalterably fixed. He has said it, and it shall be done. Things will not always remain in their present disordered state; and though this desirable period may be yet at a distance, and appearances very dark and unpromising, the word of the Lord shall prevail over all discouragements and opposition.

Prophecies which are not yet fulfilled will necessarily be obscure. Many learned men have laboured to explain the prophecies in this book, to ascertain the facts which are foretold, and to fix the dates when they may be expected to take place. But they are so divided in their judgments, and with regard to several of the most eminent who thus differ, the support their opinions derive from the character and abilities of the proposers is so nearly equal, that those who consult them are more likely to be embarrassed than satisfied. For myself, I think it becomes me to confess my ignorance, and my inability, either to reconcile the conjectures of others, or to determine which is the more probable, or to propose better of my own. I do not, therefore, undertake to give the precise sense of this passage, as it stands connected with the rest of the chapter. Nor should I, perhaps, have attempted to preach from it, but upon this occasion. It is introduced, with great propriety, in the Messiah, as a close to the second part, which begins with a view of the Lamb of God taking away the sins of the world, by the power of his priestly office; and concludes with an account of his glorious success as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

My business is only to lead you to some pleasing and profitable reflections upon this subject, now it comes in my way. There are many prophecies in the Old Testament, that speak in magnificent strains of a kingdom, which God would, in his appointed time, establish upon the earth; the sense of which is greatly weakened and narrowed, if restrained, as some commentators would restrain it, to the restoration of Israel to their own land, from their captivity in Babylon. Yet it must be allowed, that the highly figurative language in which many of these prophecies are expressed, a great part of which cannot be understood literally, renders the interpretation difficult.

What we read in the twentieth chapter of this book, of a period in which the saints shall reign with Christ during a thousand years, has given occasion to almost a thousand conjectures, concerning a millennian state. Some persons suppose, that the present frame of nature shall be dissolved and changed, and expect a proper resurrection of the dead; after which, the Lord will personally reign with his people upon the earth, when purified by fire, and restored to its primitive perfection and beauty. If so, earth will be heaven; for the state of happiness believers are taught to hope for, depends not upon local circumstances, but chiefly consists in the enjoyment of his unveiled immediate presence, and in beholding his glory. Others seem to conceive of the millennium, nearly in the same manner as the Jews formed their expectations of Messiah's kingdom. They think that temporal honours, dominion, prosperity, and wealth, will then be the portion of believers; the very portion which they are now called upon to renounce and despise. But, as I have hinted, large allowances must be made for the metaphorical language of prophecy. We read, that the streets of the New Jerusalem are paved with gold, and that the twelve gates are twelve pearls; (Rev. xxi. 15, 21;) but no person of sound judgment can suppose, that this description is to be understood strictly, according to the letter. The personal presence of Messiah with his people, is not necessary to such degrees of happiness as are compatible with the present state of mortality

and imperfection. It is sufficient, if he vouchsafes to dwell with them by his Spirit. Much less are temporal dominion and wealth necessary to the prosperity and honour of his spiritual kingdom. But what then are we encouraged to expect, beyond what has been hitherto known, with regard to this point? Let us consult the scriptures, which alone can guide and determine our inquiry. I will select some express passages, a few out of many which might be adduced, but sufficient, I hope, by the rules of sober interpretation, to lead us to a satisfactory answer.

The glory and happiness of Messiah's kingdom, is described by the prophets in terms which cannot be justly applied to any period of the church already past. They sometimes represent it by a variety of beautiful pastoral images, and sometimes in plainer language. Thus Isaiah: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountains of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more," Isa. ii. 2—4. Again, "The wolf also shall dwell with the Lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the cockatrice den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea," Isaiah, xi. 6—9. I might likewise transcribe the whole of the sixtieth chapter, but shall only offer you the latter part of it. "Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. The sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people also shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time," Isaiah, lx. 18—22. To the same purpose the prophet Ezekiel: "And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land; and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing," Ezekiel, xxxiv. 23—26. And again, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste, and desolate, and ruined cities, are become fenced and inhabited," Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27, 34, 35. The prophet Zechariah speaks to the same effect: "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord. And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people; and I will dwell in the midst of thee; and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto thee. And the Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one," Zech. ii. 10, 11; xiv. 9.

Though the promises and prophecies of this import are addressed to the church under the names of Israel, Jacob, Zion, or Jerusalem, we are certain they were not fulfilled to the nation of Israel while their civil government subsisted. Their national prosperity and glory were greatly diminished before any of these prophecies were revealed. They were an inconstant and a suffering people, during the reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel, till at length their city and temple were destroyed by the Chaldeans. And though they returned from their captivity, and their city and temple were rebuilt, they continued tributary and dependent, and were successively subject to the Persian, Macedonian, and Roman power. Their obstinate rejection and crucifixion of Messiah, filled up the measure of their iniquities, and brought wrath upon them to the uttermost.

They were soon afterwards exterminated from their land, their constitution, both of church and state, utterly subverted; and they remain to this day, in a dispersed state, which renders their observance of the law impracticable.

It seems equally plain, that these prophecies have not yet been fulfilled to the christian church. The greater part of the earth, to this day, is unacquainted with the name of Jesus. And the general face of Christendom, whether in Popish or in Protestant countries, exhibits little more of the spirit and character of the gospel, than is to be found among the Heathens. If christianity be compatible with pride or baseness, with avarice or profusion, with malice and envy, with scepticism in principle and licentiousness of conduct, then christians abound; but if humility, integrity, benevolence, and a spiritual mind, are essential to a christian; if we judge by the criterion which our Lord himself appointed, and account only those his disciples who live in the exercise of mutual love, it is to be feared that they are but few, even in the places which are most favoured with the light of the gospel. But can the scriptures be broken? Can the promises of the Lord fail? By no means. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of his word shall fail of accomplishment.

It is not necessary to suppose that every individual of mankind shall be savingly converted to the Lord in this future day of his power; but I apprehend the current language of the prophecies warrants us to hope, that the prayers and desires of the church shall, in some future period, be signally answered, in the following respects.

1. That the gospel shall visit the nations which are at present involved in darkness. The Heathen are given to Messiah for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. At present (as I have formerly observed, Ser. xxxii.) if the whole of Christendom were inhabited by real Christians, they would bear but a small proportion to the rest of mankind. Large countries in Europe, Asia, and Africa, where the gospel was once known, have been for many ages involved in Mahommedan darkness. The scattered remnants of the Greek church in Turkey are so miserably depraved and ignorant, that they scarcely deserve to be mentioned as an exception. The rest of Asia knows little of christianity, unless they have learnt it in the eastern parts from the cruelty and tyranny of men who bear the name of christians. The like may be said of America, excepting the northern provinces of our late dominion there. For the zeal of the Spaniards and Portuguese has produced few other effects than rapine, slavery, and deluges of human blood. The interior parts, both of Africa and America are unknown. The countries and islands lately discovered in the southren hemisphere, are left, as they were found, in gross ignorance. The exertions of our navigators to supply them with sheep and cows, and useful implements, from Europe, were humane and laudable. But it does not appear that the least attempt was made to impart to them the knowledge of our holy religion. The only missionary they have from us (if he be yet living,) is the much-spoken-of Omiah. This man was brought to England, almost from the Antipodes; he spent some time amongst us, and was then sent back to tell his countrymen what he had seen and heard. But if he gave a faithful account of our customs, morals, and religion, so far as they fell within the circle of his own observations, the relation would certainly be little to our honour, and I am afraid much to their hurt. In brief, a large part of Europe, almost the whole of the other three continents, with the islands in the Eastern and Southern Oceans, are destitute of the true gospel. But there is a time approaching, called the fulness of the Gentiles, when the Redeemer's glory shall dawn and shine upon all nations. And though we cannot see when or how this happy change shall be effected, yet in the Lord's hour, mountains shall sink into plains. Nor is it more improbable to us now, than it would have seemed to an inhabitant of Rome in the time of Julius Cæsar, that the island of Great Britain should one day be distinguished by all those privileges which the Providence of God has since bestowed upon it.

2. That this gospel shall prevail not in word only, but in power. Even where the name of Christ is professed, but little of the power of it is at present known. The superstition and false worship generally prevalent within the pale of the Roman and Greek churches, may be mentioned without offence to Protestants. But the bulk of the Protestant countries are equally overspread with scepticism and wickedness. Few comparatively, among Protestants, are friendly to that gospel which the apostles preached; and much fewer are they who are influenced by it. Perhaps no nation is favoured with greater advantages for knowing the truth than our nation, nor any city more favoured than this city. I doubt not but there are persons now living, who would have been thought eminent christians, if they had lived in the first and happiest age of the church; and I trust their number is greater than we are aware of. The Lord has a hidden people, little known to the world or to each other. But if we judge by the standard of truth, we must acknowledge that the power of religious profession is very low. How little does it appear in the lives, tempers, and pursuits of the most who hear the gospel; but the time will come when christians shall again be

known by their integrity, spiritual-mindedness, and benevolence, and by all the fruits of rightcousness, which are, by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. The fall of mystical Babylon, and of Antichrist, in its various forms, and the calling of the Jews, are events which are positively foretold, and which, when they come to pass, will have great effects. Zion, as yet, is only building, but it shall be built.

3. That the animosities and disputes which prevail among christians shall cease. The observations of a late ingenious writer, which, it is to be feared, he was confirmed in by his own experience, is too much founded in truth:—"We have just religion enough to make us hate one another." The spirit of party, prejudice, and bigotry, and interest, a zeal for systems, forms, modes, and denominations furnish men with plausible pretences for indulging their unsanctified passions, and deceive them into an opinion, that while they are gratifying their pride and self-will, they are only labouring to promote the cause of God and truth. Hence often the feuds which obtain among religious people are pursued with greater violence, and to greater lengths, and are productive of more mischievous consequences, than the quarrels of drunkards. The lovers of peace, who refuse to take a part in these contentions, but rather weep over them in secret, are censured and despised as neutrals and cowards, by the angry combatants on all sides, while the world despises and laughs at them all. It was not so in the beginning, nor will it be so always. The hour is coming, when believers shall be united in love, shall agree in all that is essential to a life of faith and holiness, and shall live in the exercise of forbearance and tenderness towards each other, if in some points of smaller importance, they cannot think exactly alike; which possibly may be the case in the best times, in the present imperfect state of human nature. Ephraim shall then no more envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim, Isa. xi. 13.

4. That it will be a time of general peace. At present the kingdoms, which, by their profession, should be subjects of the Prince of Peace, are perpetually disturbing, invading, and destroying each other. They live in habits of mutual fear and jealousy, and maintain great armies on all sides; that each nation may be prepared, if occasion offers, to strike the first blow. War is followed as a trade, and cultivated as a science; and they who, with the greatest diligence and success, spread devastation and ruin far and wide, and deluge the earth with human blood, acquire the title of heroes and conquerors. Can there be a stronger confirmation of what we read in scripture concerning the depravity of man? Can we conceive an employment more suited to gratify the malignity of Satan and the powers of darkness, if they were permitted to appear and act amongst us in human shapes? Could such enormities possibly obtain, if the mild and merciful spirit of the gospel generally prevailed? but it shall prevail at last, and then the nations shall learn war no more, Isa. ii. 4.

How transporting the thought! that a time shall yet arrive, when the love of God and man, of truth and righteousness, shall obtain through the earth. The evils (and these are the greatest evils of human life) which men bring upon themselves, and upon each other, by their wickedness, shall cease; and we may believe that the evils in the natural world will be greatly abated. Sin will no longer call down the tokens of God's displeasure, by such public calamities as hurricanes, earthquakes, pestilence and famine. And if some natural evils, as pain and sickness, should remain, submission to the will of God, and the compassion and tenderness of men towards the afflicted, will render them tolerable.

If this prospect be desirable to us, surely it will be the object of our prayers. The Lord will do great things, but he will be inquired of by his people for the performance.

But to many persons the extension of dominion and commerce appears much more desirable. The glory and extent of the British government has been eagerly pursued, and the late diminution of our national grandeur and influence has been much laid to heart; while the glory of the Redeemer's kingdom, and the conversion of the Heathens, are considered by the politicians and merchants of the earth, as trivial concerns, unworthy of their notice, or rather as obstacles to the views of ambition and avarice. But it is said of Messiah, and of his church, The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish, Isa. lx. 12. The word of God may be slighted, but it cannot be annulled; and it is more a subject for lamentation than wonder, that our national prosperity should decline, when we are indifferent, yea, adverse to that cause which the great Governor of the world has engaged to promote and establish.

SERMON XXXVIII.

KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

(*And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh, a name written,*) *KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.* Rev. xix. 16.

THE description of the administration and glory of the Redeemer's kingdom, in defiance of all opposition, concludes the second part of the Messiah. Three different passages from this book are selected to form a

grand chorus, of which his title in this verse is the close; a title which has been sometimes vainly usurped by proud worms of the earth. Eastern monarchs, in particular, have affected to style themselves King of kings, and Lord of lords. In the scriptural language, men, whether high or low, rich or poor, one with another, are compared to worms and potsherds of the earth; but they are by nature so strongly affected by pride, that they cannot invent titles of honour answerable to the idea they have of their own importance, without intrenching upon the divine prerogative. Thus sovereignty, majesty, holiness, and grace, and other attributes which properly belong to God alone, are parcelled out among the great. But let the great and the mighty know that wherein they speak proudly, Messiah is above them. The whole verse (of which the latter clause only is in the Oratorio) offers two points to our meditations.

I. How he is represented as wearing his title. It is written, or inscribed, upon his vesture dipped in blood, and upon his thigh; either upon that part of his vesture which covers his thigh, or upon the upper part of his vesture, and upon his thigh likewise.

II. The title itself,—King of kings, and Lord of lords. Whatever power the kings and lords among mankind possess, is derived from him, and absolutely subject to his control.

I. The manner in which he wears his name or title. It is written upon his vesture, and upon his thigh.

1. This name being written upon his vesture, denotes the manifestation and the ground of his authority. It is written upon his outward garment, to be read, known, and acknowledged by all beholders. And it is upon his bloody garment, upon the vesture stained with his own blood, and the blood of his enemies; which intimates to us, that his government is founded upon the success of his great undertaking. In the passage from whence this verse is selected, there are three names attributed to Messiah. He has a name which no one knows but himself (ver. 12,) agreeable to what he declared when upon earth: "No man (ουδεις, no one, neither man nor angel) knoweth the Son, but the Father;" this refers to his eternal power and Godhead. A second name, The Word of God, (ver. 13,) denotes the mystery of the divine personality. The name in my text imports his glory, as the Mediator between God and man, in our nature, which, when he resumed it from the grave, became the seat of all power and authority; which power we are now taught to consider, not merely as the power of God, to whom it essentially belongs, but as the power of God exercised in and by that Man who died upon the cross for our sins. In consequence of his obedience unto death, he received a name which is above every name. Phil. ii. 9. This inscription his own people read by the eye of faith in the present life, and it inspires them with confidence and joy, under the many tribulations they pass through in the course of their profession. Hereafter it shall be openly known, and read by all men. Every eye shall see it, and every heart must either bow or break before him.

2. It is written upon his thigh. The thigh is the emblem of power, and is the part of the body on which the sword is girded, Ps. xlv. 3. By this emblem we are taught, that he will assuredly maintain and exercise the right which he has acquired. As he has a just claim to the title, he will act accordingly. Many titles among men are merely titular. So the King of Great Britain is styled likewise King of France, though he has neither authority nor possession in that kingdom. But this name which Messiah bears is full of life, truth, and influence. He is styled King of kings, and Lord of lords, because he really is so; because he actually rules and reigns over them, and does according to his own pleasure in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, with an absolute and uncontrollable sway, so that none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? Dan. iv. 35.

II. The title itself is King of kings, and Lord of lords. He is the Prince of the kings of the earth, Rev. i. 5. Too many of them imagine a vain thing. They take counsel together, and set themselves against him, (Ps. ii. 4,) saying, Let us break his bands asunder. But he sitteth in the heavens, and has them in derision. He has his hook in their nose, and his bridle in their lips, and the result of all their contrivances is neither more nor less than the accomplishment of his will.

1. The rage they discover, and the resistance they make, cannot weaken this truth, but rather render it more evident. If it be asked, Why does he permit them to resist? we may give an answer in point from the case of Pharaoh. He resisted and he perished. He was often warned and rebuked, but he still hardened his neck, and continued stubborn under repeated judgments, till at length he was destroyed without remedy. Thus the God of Israel was more magnified, and the people of Israel were more honoured, in the view of the surrounding nations, when they were brought from Egypt with a high hand and with a stretched-out arm, and when Pharaoh and his armies were overthrown in the Red Sea, than the nature of the case would have admitted, if Pharaoh had made no opposition to their departure. Yet the obstinacy of Pharaoh was properly his own. It is true, we are assured that God hardened his heart; but we are not thereby warranted to suppose that God is the author of the sin, which he hates and forbids. It is written again, that

God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man, (James i. 13,) and the scripture is to be interpreted consistently with itself. It would be absurd to ascribe darkness or ice to the agency of the sun, though both inevitably follow, if the light and heat of the sun be withdrawn to a certain degree. A degree of heat is necessary to keep water in that state of fluidity which we commonly suppose essential to its nature; but it is rather essential to the nature of water to harden into ice, if it be deprived of the heat which is necessary to preserve it in a fluid state; and the hardest metals will melt and flow like water, if heat be proportionably increased. Thus it is with the heart of fallen man. In whatever degree it is soft and impressive, capable of feeling and tenderness, we must attribute it to the secret influence of the Father and Fountain of light; and if he is pleased to withdraw his influence, nothing more is needful to its complete induration.

2. The kings of the earth are continually disturbing the world with their schemes of ambition. They expect to carry every thing before them, and have seldom any higher end in view than the gratification of their own passions. But in all they do they are but servants of this great King and Lord, and fulfil his purposes, as the instruments he employs to inflict prescribed punishment upon transgressors against him, or to open a way for the spread of his gospel. Thus, under the Old-Testament dispensation (for he was King from everlasting,) the successes of Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar, and the exaltation of Cyrus were entirely owing to their being employed by him, as an axe or a saw in the hand of the workman, Isa. x. 15. And they acted under a limited commission, beyond which they could not go. They had one thing in view, He had another; and when his design was accomplished, we hear of them no more. Time would not suffice, were I to adduce the many striking instances of the like kind which offer to observation from the perusal of modern history. It is well known, with respect to that great event, the Reformation from Popery in the sixteenth century, and especially in our own land, that many of the principal persons who contributed to its establishment hated it in their hearts. But their ambition, appetites, and worldly policy engaged them in such measures, as the King of kings over-ruled to produce consequences which they neither intended nor could foresee, and which, when they did apprehend, they would have prevented if they could, but it was too late. Future writers, I doubt not, will make the like reflection upon the American war, in the origin and progress of which there was such an evident disproportion between the apparent causes and the effects produced by them, between the first designs and expectations of the principal actors on both sides and the final event, that I think they who do not perceive a superintending Providence conducting the whole affair, as a preparation to still greater and more important revolutions, must be quite at a loss to account for what has already happened, upon any principles of human policy or foresight.

3. That he is King of kings, and Governor among the nations, is farther evident from the preservation of his people; for the world is against them, and they have no protector but him. The wrath of man, like the waves of the sea, has bounds prescribed to it which it cannot pass. So far as he is pleased to over-rule it to his own praise, he will permit it to operate, but the remainder, that is not subservient to the accomplishment of his purpose, he will restrain, Psalm lxxvi. 10. But he works so secretly, though powerfully, by the agency of second causes, that only they who are enlightened by his word and Spirit can perceive his interference. He permitted Ahithophel to give that counsel to Absalom, which, though wicked, was, in the political sense of the word, prudent; that is, it was the probable method of putting David into the power of his rebellious son. David had prayed that the Lord would turn Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness, 2 Sam. xv. 31. Had the Lord instantly deprived Ahithophel of his reason, this prayer would have been more visibly, but not more effectually answered, than by the counter-advice of Hushai, which though rash and extravagant, being suited to gratify the vanity and folly of Absalom, (2 Sam. xvii. 14,) rendered the other abortive. Sometimes the enemies of his church divide and wrangle among themselves, and then one party, to mortify and oppose the other, will protect those whom otherwise they wish to destroy. Thus Paul escaped from the malice of the Jewish council, by the sudden disagreement which arose between the Pharisees and Sadducees, (Acts xxiii. 7,) though they came together equally determined to destroy him. At other times, kings and statesmen act so inconsistently with their professed aims, and take steps so directly calculated to prevent what they wish to obtain, or to bring upon themselves what they mean to avoid, that we can only say they are infatuated. A very small compliance seemed likely to have secured the affection of the twelve tribes to Rehoboam. We are ready to wonder that he could not be prevailed on to speak mildly to the people for one day, with a view of engaging them to be his servants for ever. But when we read that the cause was from the Lord, (1 Kings xii. 15,) and that, in this way, his purpose of separating the kingdoms of Israel and Judah was effected, the wonder ceases. Very observable, likewise, was the coincidence of circumstances which preserved the Jews in Persia from the destructive designs of their adversary Haman. If the king

had slept that night, as usual, or if his attendants had read to him in any book but the Chronicle of the empire, or in any part of that Chronicle but the very passage in which the service of Mordecai had been recorded, humanly speaking Haman would have carried his point, Esther vi. 1. In this manner, by a concurrence of circumstances, each of them, if considered singly, apparently trivial, and all of them contingent with respect to any human forcsight or prevention, the Lord often pours contempt upon the wise and the mighty, and defeats their deepest laid and best-concerted schemes, in the moment when they promise themselves success.

Many salutary and comfortable inferences may be drawn from the consideration of this subject. Some of them I may perhaps have formerly mentioned, but they will well bear a repetition. We have need to be reminded of what we already know.

1. It should inspire us with confidence. If the Lord of hosts, the Lord of lords, be for us, what weapon or counsel can prosper against us? However dark and threatening appearances may be, we need not tremble for the ark of God, the concernments of his church are in safe hands. The cause so dear to us, is still more dear to him. He has power to support it when it is opposed, and grace to revive it when it is drooping. It has often been brought low, but never has been, never shall be forsaken. When he will work none can hinder. Nor need you fear for yourselves, if you have committed yourselves and your all to him. The very hairs of your head are numbered, Matt. x. 30. There is a hedge of protection around you (Job i. 10,) which none can break through without his permission; nor will he permit you to be touched, except when he designs to make a temporary and seeming evil conducive to your real and permanent advantage.

2. It should affect us with an admiring and thankful sense of his condescension. "Lord, what is man that thou shouldest be so mindful of him?" He humbles himself to behold the things that are in heaven, Psal. cxiii. 6. But he stoops still lower. He affords his attention and favour to sinful men. His eye is always upon his people, his ear open to their prayers. Not a sigh or falling tear escapes his notice. He pities them as a father pities his children; he proportions their trials to their strength, or their strength to their trials, and so adjusts his dispensations to their state, that they never suffer unnecessarily, nor in vain.

3. How great is the dignity and privilege of true believers! Is the man congratulated or envied whom the king delighteth to honour? Believers are more frequently despised than envied in this world. But they may congratulate one another. The King of kings is their friend. They have honours and pleasures which the world knows nothing of. Their titles are high, they are the sons and the daughters of the Lord Almighty, 2 Cor. v. 18. Their possessions are great, for all things are theirs, 1 Cor. iii. 21. They are assured of what is best for them in this life, and of life eternal hereafter. They are now nearly related to the King of kings, and shall ere long be acknowledged and owned by him before assembled worlds. They who now account the proud happy, will be astonished and confounded when they shall see the righteous, whom they once undervalued, shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of God.

4. We may lastly infer the extreme folly and danger of those who persist in their rebellion and opposition against this King of kings, and Lord of lords. Though he exercises much patience and long-suffering towards them for a season, the hour is approaching when his wrath will burn like fire. It is written, and must be fulfilled, "the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God," Psal. ix. 17. Oh the solemnities of that great day, when the frame of nature shall be dissolved, when the Judge shall appear, the books be opened, and all mankind shall be summoned to his tribunal! Will not you tremble and bow before him, ye careless ones, while he is seated upon a throne of grace, and while the door of grace stands open? Once more I call, I warn, I charge you, to repent and believe the gospel. If today you will hear his voice it is not yet too late. But who can answer for to-morrow? Perhaps this night your soul may be required of you, Luke xii. 20. Are you prepared for the summons? If not, seize the present opportunity. Attend to the one thing needful. Seek his face, that your soul may live. If not, remember that you are warned; your blood will be upon your own head. We have delivered our message, and if you finally reject it you must answer for yourselves to him whose message it is.

SERMON XXXIX.

JOB'S FAITH AND EXPECTATION.

I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. Job xix. 25, 26.

CHRISTIANITY, that is, the religion of which Messiah is the author and object, the foundation, life, and glory, though not altogether as old as the creation, is nearly so. It is coeval with the first promise and intimation of mercy given to fallen man. When

Adam by transgression had violated the order and law of his creation, his religion, that is, the right disposition of his heart towards God, was at an end. Sin deprived him at once of faith and hope, of love and joy. He no longer desired, he no longer could bear the presence of his offended Maker. He vainly sought to avoid it; and when compelled to answer, though he could not deny his guilt, instead of making an ingenuous confession, he attempted to fix the blame upon the woman, or rather indeed upon the Lord himself, who had provided her for him. But mercy, undeserved and undesired, relieved him from a state in which he was already become obdurate and desperate. A promise was given him of the seed of the woman, (Gen. iii. 15,) which virtually contained, as the seed contains the future plant, the substance of all the subsequent promises which were fulfilled by the incarnation of the Son of God, and by all that he did, or suffered, or obtained for sinners, in the character of Mediator. For a sinner can have no comfortable intercourse with the holy God, but through a Mediator. Therefore the apostle observes of the patriarchs and servants of God, under the Old Testament, "These all died in faith," Heb. xi. 13. We can say nothing higher than this, of the apostles and martyrs, under the New Testament. They died, not trusting in themselves that they were righteous, not rejoicing in the works of their own hands; but they died, like the thief upon the cross, in faith, resting all their hope upon him, who, by his obedience unto death, is the end of the law for righteousness unto every one that believeth, Rom. x. 4. We have greater advantages, in point of light and liberty, than those of old. The prophecies concerning Messiah, which, at the time of delivery, were obscure, are to us infallibly interpreted by their accomplishment. And we know that the great atonement, typically pointed out by their sacrifices, has been actually made; that the Lamb of God has, by the one offering of himself, put away sin. But as to the ground and substance, their faith and hope were the same with ours. Abraham rejoiced to see the day of Christ, (John viii. 56;) and aged Jacob, soon after he had said, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord," died with the same composure and willingness as Simeon did, who saw it with his own eyes. Job, who was perhaps contemporary with Jacob, who at least is, with great probability, thought to have lived before Moses, gives us in this passage a strong and clear testimony of his faith. And it forms a beautiful and well chosen introduction to the third part of the Messiah, the principal subject of which is, the present privileges and future prospects of those who believe in the Saviour's name.

The learned are far from being agreed either in the translation, or in the explanation of this text. The word *worms* and *body* being printed in Italics in our version, will apprize the attentive English reader, that there are no words answerable to them in the Hebrew. If you omit these words, something will be evidently wanting to make a complete sense. This want different writers have supplied, according to their different judgments, and from hence chiefly has arisen the variety of versions and interpretations. But it would be very improper for me, in this place, to take up your time, and to draw off your attention from the great concerns which should fill our minds when we meet in the house of God, by giving you a detail of controversies and criticisms, which after all are much more uncertain than important. We need not dispute, whether Job, in this passage, professes his assurance of the incarnation of Messiah, or of his resurrection, or of his final appearance to judge the world; or whether he is only declaring his own personal faith and hope in him. These several senses are not so discordant that if we determine for one we must exclude the rest. I shall content myself with the words as I find them. And I hope, that if we should miss some of the precise ideas which Job might have when he spoke, we shall not greatly mistake his general meaning, nor wander far wide from the scope of the text.

Four things are observable:

I. The title of *Redeemer*.

II. The appropriating word *My*.

III. His standing upon *the earth*.

IV. Job's expectation of seeing him *in his flesh*.

I. The title. There is no name of Messiah more significant, comprehensive, or endearing, than the name Redeemer. The name of Saviour expresses what he does for sinners. He saves them from guilt and wrath, from sin, from the present evil world, from the powers of darkness, and from all their enemies. He saves them with an everlasting salvation. But the word Redeemer, intimates likewise the manner in which he saves them. For it is not merely by the word of his power, as he saved his disciples when in jeopardy upon the lake, by saying to the winds and the seas, "Peace, be still: and there was a great calm;" (Mark iv. 39;) but by price, by paying a ransom for them, and pouring out the blood of his heart as an atonement for their sins. The Hebrew word for Redeemer, *Goel*, primarily signifies, a near kinsman, or the next of kin; he with whom the right of redemption lay, (Numb. xxxv. 19, 21. Ruth iv. 1—3,) and who, by virtue of his nearness of relation, was the legal avenger of blood. Thus Messiah took upon him our nature, and by assuming our flesh and blood, became nearly related to us, that he might redeem our forfeited inheritance, restore us to liberty, and avenge our cause against Satan, the enemy and murderer of our souls.

But thus he made himself also responsible for us, to pay our debts, and to answer the demands of the justice and law of God on our behalf. He fulfilled his engagement. He suffered, and he died on this account. But our Redeemer, who was once dead, is now alive, and liveth for evermore, and has the keys of death, and of hades, Rev. i. 18. This is he of whom Job saith, I know that he liveth (was then living,) though he was not to stand upon the earth, until the latter day. He is the living One, having life in himself, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, Heb. xiii. 8. Such was his own language to the Jews, "Before Abraham was, I am," John viii. 58. Therefore the Redeemer is mighty, and his redemption is sure. He is able to save to the uttermost. His power is unlimited, and his official authority, as Mediator, is founded in a covenant, ratified by his own blood, and by the oath of the unchangeable God, Ps. cx. 4.

II. But Job uses the language of appropriation. He says, *My* Redeemer. And all that we know, or hear, or speak of him, will avail us but little, unless we are really and personally interested in him as our Redeemer. A cold speculative knowledge of the gospel, such as a lawyer has of a will or a deed, which he reads with no farther design than to understand the tenor and import of the writing, will neither save nor comfort the soul. The believer reads it, as the will is read by the heir, who finds his own name in it, and is warranted by it to call the estate and all the particulars specified his own. He appropriates the privileges to himself, and says, the promises are mine; the pardon, the peace, the heaven, of which I read, are all mine. This is the will and testament of the Redeemer, of my Redeemer. The great Testator remembered me in his will, which is confirmed, and rendered valid by his death, (Heb. ix. 16,) and therefore I humbly claim, and assuredly expect, the benefit of all that he has bequeathed. But how shall we obtain this comfortable persuasion, and preserve it against all the cavils of our enemies, who will endeavour to litigate our right? I seem to have before me a proper occasion of discussing a point, very important, and by too many misunderstood; I mean the nature of that assurance of hope, which the scripture speaks of as attainable, which has been happily experienced by many believers, and which all are exhorted and encouraged to seek after, in the methods of God's appointment. But my plan will only permit me to offer a few brief hints upon the subject.

1. Many respectable writers and preachers have considered this assurance as essential to true faith. But we have the scripture in our hands, and are not bound to abide by the decisions of any man, farther than as they agree with this standard. The most eminent properties, or effects ascribed to faith, are, that it works by love, (Gal. v. 6,) purifies the heart, (Acts xv. 9,) and overcomes the world, 1 John v. 4. I think it cannot easily be denied, by those who are competent judges in the case, that there are persons to be found, who give these evidences that they are believers, and yet are far from the possession of an abiding assurance. They hope they love the Lord, but there is such a disproportion between the sensible exercise of their love, and the conviction they have of their obligations to him, that they are often afraid they do not love him supremely; and if not, they know that in the scriptural sense they do not love him at all. They can say from their hearts that they desire to love him, but they dare not go farther. But there is a weak and a strong faith; they differ not in kind, but only in degree. Faith is compared to a grain of mustard-seed, (Matt. xvii. 20,) which, under the cultivation of the heavenly Husbandman, who first sows the seed in the heart, grows up to assurance. But in its infant and weak state it is true and acceptable faith. Far from breaking the bruised reed, (Is. xlii. 3,) he will strengthen it. He will not quench the smoking flax, but will in due time fan it into a flame.

2. I will go a step farther. Were I to define the assurance we are speaking of, I should perhaps say, it is, in our present state, the combined effect of faith and ignorance. That assurance which does not spring from true faith in the Son of God, wrought by the operation of the Holy Spirit, is no better than presumption. But I believe what we call assurance, even when it is right, is not entirely owing to the strength of our faith, but in a great measure to our having such faint and slight views of some truths, which, if we had a more powerful impression of them, unless our faith was likewise proportionably strengthened at the same time, might possibly make the strongest assurance totter and tremble. I will explain myself. Admitting that I had a right to tell you, that I am so far assured of my interest in the gospel-salvation, as to have no perplexing doubt either of my acceptance or of my perseverance, you would much over-rate me, if you should suppose this was a proof that my faith is very strong. Alas! I have but a very slight perception of the evil of sin, of the deceitfulness of my own heart, of the force and subtlety of my spiritual enemies, of the strictness and spirituality of the holy law, or of the awful majesty and holiness of the great God with whom I have to do. If, in the moment while I am speaking to you, he should be pleased to impress these solemn realities upon my mind, with a conviction and evidence tenfold greater than I have ever known hitherto (which I conceive would still be vastly short of the truth,) unless my faith was also strengthened by a ten-

fold clearer and more powerful discovery of the grace and glory of the Saviour, you would probably see my countenance change and my speech falter. The Lord, in compassion to our weakness, shows us these things by little and little, as we are able to bear them; and if, as we advance in the knowledge of ourselves and of our dangers, our knowledge of the unsearchable riches of Christ advances equally, we may rejoice in hope, we may even possess an assured hope. But let not him who hath put on his harness, boast as though he had put it off, 1 Kings xx. 11. We are yet in an enemy's land, and know not what changes we may meet with, before our warfare is finished.

3. How far our assurance is solid, may be estimated by the effects. It will surely make us humble, spiritual, peaceful, and patient. I pity those who talk confidently of their hope, as if they were out of the reach of doubts and fears, while their tempers are unsanctified, and their hearts are visibly attached to the love of the present world. I fear they know but little of what they say. I am better pleased when persons of this character complain of doubts and darkness. It proves at least that they are not destitute of feeling, nor, as yet, lulled into a spirit of careless security. And there are professors, whom, instead of endeavouring to comfort in their present state, I would rather wish to make still more suspicious of themselves than they are; till they are convinced of the impossibility of enjoying true peace, while their hearts are divided between God and the world. For though sanctification is not the ground of a good hope, it is the certain concomitant of it. If it be true, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord, (Heb. xii. 14,) it must likewise be true, that without holiness no man can have a scriptural and well-founded hope of seeing him.

4. But to give a direct answer to the inquiry, How shall I know that he is my Redeemer? I may use the prophet's words, "Then shall ye know, if you follow on to know the Lord," Hos. vi. 3. Our names are not actually inserted in the Bible, but our characters are described there. He is the Redeemer of all who put their trust in him. You will not trust in him, unless you feel your need of him; you cannot, unless you know him, as he is revealed in the word; you do not unless you love him, and are devoted to his cause and service. If you know yourself to be a sinner deserving to perish, if you see that there is no help or hope for you but in Jesus, and venture yourself upon his gracious invitation, believing that he is able to save to the uttermost; and if you really include holiness and a deliverance from sin, in the idea of the salvation which you long for, then he is your Redeemer. If, among us, an act of grace was published, inviting all criminals to surrender themselves, with a promise of mercy to those who did; though no one was mentioned by name in the act, yet every one who complied with it, and pleaded it, would be entitled to the benefit. Such an act of grace is the gospel. The Lord says, "This is my beloved Son, hear him," Matt. iii. 17. If you approve him, he is yours. If you are still perplexed with doubts, they are owing to the weakness of your faith. But there are means appointed for the growth of faith. Wait patiently upon the Lord in the use of those means, and you shall find he has not bid you seek his face in vain. Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Live not in the omission of known duty. Do not perplex yourself with vain reasonings, but believe and obey, and the Lord shall be with you. There are some peculiar cases. Allowances must be made for the effects of constitution and temperament. Some sincere persons are beset and followed, through life, with distressing temptations. But in general, simplicity and obedience lead to assurance. And they who hearken to the Lord, and walk in the way of his commandments, go on from strength to strength, (Isa. xlviii. 18;) their peace and hope increase like a river, which, from small beginnings, runs broader and deeper, till it falls into the ocean. But to return to Job.—

III. Another article of his creed concerning the Redeemer, is, He shall stand in the latter day upon the earth. The latter or last days, in the prophetical style, usually denote the Messiah's day, the times of the gospel. To this time Job looked forward. He beheld the promises afar off. Thus Messiah was the consolation of his people of old, as he who was come. And it should be our consolation to know that he is come. His standing upon the earth may include the whole of his appearance in the flesh; his life, passion, and resurrection. The manner of expression intimates something important and wonderful. Had Job, in the spirit of prophecy, spoken of any individual of Adam's race, of Isaiah, or Paul, there would have been nothing extraordinary predicted by saying he shall stand upon the earth, for all men do so in their successive generations. But that the Redeemer, the Lord of glory, the Maker of all things, should condescend to visit his creatures, to dwell with men for a season, to stand and walk upon the earth with them, clothed in a body like their own, is an event which never could have been expected if it had not been revealed from heaven. It was the object of Job's faith, and well deserving the solemn preface with which he introduces his firm persuasion of it, "Oh! that my words were graven with an iron pen in the rock for ever!" When Solomon had finished the temple of the Lord of Hosts, instead of admiring the magnificence of the building, he was struck

with the condescension of the Lord, who would vouchsafe to notice it, and honour it with a symbol of his presence, "Will God indeed dwell with men upon the earth? Behold the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, how much less this house which I have built!" 1 Kings viii. 27. But what was the visible glory which appeared in that temple, if compared with the glory of the only begotten Son of God, when he tabernacled in our flesh! The human nature of Christ is that true temple, not made with hands, in which God is manifested upon a throne of grace, that sinners may approach him without dismay, and receive, out of his fulness, grace for grace. To him all the prophets gave witness, on him the desire and hope of his people, in all ages, have been fixed. He was to stand upon the earth, as Mediator between God and man. And in the same office, now he is upon the throne of glory, he is, and will be, admired, adored, and trusted in, by all his believing people, to the end of time.

IV. From the Redeemer's appearance upon earth, Job infers the restoration and resurrection of his own body. His trials had been great—bereaved of his children and substance, afflicted with grievous boils, harassed with temptations, reproached by his friends: out of all the troubles the Lord his Redeemer delivered him, and his latter days were more prosperous than his beginning. But he knew that he must go the way of all the earth, that his body must lie in the grave, and return to dust. But he expected a future time after his dissolution, when in the flesh, for himself, and with his own eyes, he should see God. The expressions are strong and repeated. He does not speak the language of hesitation and doubt, but of confidence and certainty. It likewise appears that he placed his ultimate happiness in seeing God. His words are not very different from those of the apostle, "When he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is," 1 John iii. 2. To behold the glory of God, as our Redeemer, to be in a state of favour and communion with him, and according to the utmost capacity of our nature, to be conformed to him in holiness and love, is that felicity which God has promised and to which all his servants aspire. Some foretastes of it they enjoy in the present life, which cheer them under their trials, and raise them above the grovelling pursuits of those who have their portion only in this world. But their chief possession is in hope. They look forward to a brighter period, when they shall awaken from the sleep of death, to behold his face in righteousness, Ps. xvii. 15. Then, and not till then, they shall be completely satisfied. The expectation of Job, therefore, affords a sufficient proof that the doctrines of an immortal state, and of a resurrection unto life, were included in the revelations which God afforded to his people in the earliest times, and consequently, that the religion of the Old Testament and of the New is substantially the same.

The great inquiry this subject should impress upon us, is, are we thus minded? What think you, my dear friends, of Christ? Have you accepted him as your Redeemer; and have you a good hope that you shall see him to your comfort, when he shall return to judge the world? If so, you may rejoice. Changes you must expect. You must die, and your flesh must be food for worms. But he has promised to "change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the mighty power whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself," Phil. iii. 21.

SERMON XL.

THE LORD IS RISEN INDEED.

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.—1 Cor. xv. 20.

As, in the animal economy, the action of the heart and of the lungs, though very different, are equally necessary for the maintenance of life, and we cannot say that either of them is more essentially requisite than the other; so in the system of divine revelation, there are some truths, the knowledge and belief of which singly considered, are fundamentals with respect to the salvation of a sinner. And though they are distinct in themselves, we cannot determine which of them is of most importance to us; for unless we know, approve, and receive them all, we can have no experience of a life of faith in the Son of God. Such, for instance, is the scriptural doctrine concerning the depravity of human nature. This is a first principle; for unless we understand what our state is in the sight of God, the enormity of our transgressions, and our incapacity for true happiness, until our hearts are changed by the power of his grace, we cannot rightly understand a single chapter in the Bible. Such, likewise, is the doctrine of the atonement. For, if we could know how totally we are lost, without knowing the gracious method which God has appointed for our recovery, we must unavoidably sink into despair. Again, if we were sensible of our state as sinners, and even if we trusted in Christ for salvation, yet the apostle observes in this chapter, that unless he be indeed risen from the dead, our faith in him would be in vain and we should still be in our sins. The resurrection of Christ, therefore, is a doctrine absolutely essential to our hope and comfort; and it is likewise a sure pledge, that they who believe in him shall be raised from the dead

also, by virtue of their union with him, and according to his pattern. For "now is Christ risen from the dead, and is become the first-fruits of them that slept." Let us at present consider his resurrection.—The sure consequence of it, that his people shall be raised from the dead, will offer to our meditations from the following verses.

The resurrection of Christ, being, as a fact, the great pillar upon which the weight and importance of Christianity rest, it has pleased the Lord to put the indubitable proof of it within our power. There is no one point of ancient uninspired history so certainly and unquestionably authenticated. It may seem unnecessary to prove it, and to many of you it is entirely so. Yet I think it proper to take some notice of it; not so much on account of the weak and trifling cavils of infidels, as for the sake of persons who may be assaulted with temptations. For many plain people, who are not much acquainted with the subtilties of sceptics, are sometimes pestered with difficulties and objections in their own minds, perhaps more shrewd and powerful than such as are commonly found in books, or retailed in coffee-houses. For unbelief is deeply rooted in every heart; and Satan, our great enemy, can, and if permitted, will, work powerfully upon this evil disposition. He endeavours to beat us off from the belief of every truth of scripture, and of this among the rest. And many persons who have been so well convinced that our Lord rose from the dead, as to venture their souls and their all upon it, have found themselves at a loss how to answer the enemy in an hour of sharp and pressing temptations.

Let us suppose, then, that we had lately received the news of some extraordinary and almost incredible event, and let us consider what evidence we should require to satisfy us that the report was true, and apply the same kind of reasoning to the point in hand. That there was, a great while ago, a person named Jesus, who gathered disciples, and died upon a cross, is universally acknowledged. Both Jews and Heathens, who lived at the time, and afterwards, not only admitted it, but urged it as a reproach against his followers. Many testimonies of this kind are still extant.

The turning point between his enemies and his friends, is his resurrection. This has been denied. We acknowledge that he did not appear publicly after he arose, as he did before his death, but only to a competent number of his followers, to whom he showed himself, and satisfied them, by many infallible proofs, that he was alive, and that he was the same person whom they had seen crucified. They reported what they saw, and we believe their report. We are therefore to inquire, Who they were? and on what grounds we receive and rely upon their testimony?

If they were mistaken themselves, or if they were engaged and agreed in a crafty design of imposing upon mankind, we, who depend upon their relation, may be involved in their mistake, or deceived by their artifice. But if neither of these suppositions can possibly be true, if they were competent and impartial witnesses; then we are not only justified in giving credit to their testimony, but it must be unreasonable, and (in a case of this importance) presumptuous and dangerous to reject it.

I. That they were competent judges of what they asserted, is evident,

1. From their numbers.—The eye-witnesses of this fact were many. "He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; after that he was seen of five hundred brethren at once: after that he was seen of James, then of all the apostles; and last of all, he was seen of me also," 1 Cor. xv. 5—8. Thus Paul wrote when multitudes who lived at the time were still living, and would readily have contradicted him, if he had declared an untruth. Five hundred concurring witnesses are sufficient to establish the credit of a fact, which they all saw with their own eyes, if their word may be depended upon. We can be certain of things which we never saw no otherwise than by the testimony of others. And certainty may be attained in this way. For though some persens would appropriate the word demonstration to mathematical evidence, yet moral evidence may be in many cases equally conclusive, and compel assent with equal force. I am so fully satisfied by the report of others, that there are such cities as Paris or Rome, though I never saw them, that I am not more able seriously to question their existence, than I am to doubt the truth of a proposition in Euclid which I have seen demonstrated.

2. From the nature of the fact, in which it was not possible that so many persons could be mistaken or deceived. Some of them saw him, not once only, but frequently. His appearance to others was attended with peculiar striking circumstances and effects. His disciples seem not to have expected his resurrection, though he had often foretold it previous to his sufferings. Nor did they hastily credit the women who first saw him in their way from the sepulchre. Thomas refused to believe the report of all his brethren, to whom our Lord had shown himself. He would see for himself; he required more than ocular proof, for he said, "Except I put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe," John xx. 25. It is no wonder, that, when these proofs were offered him, he fully yielded to conviction, and with gratitude and joy addressed his risen Saviour in the language of adoration and love, "My Lord, and my God!" But his former conduct

showed that he was not credulous, nor disposed to receive the report as a truth, however desirable, without sufficient evidence.

II. As they were competent judges, so they were upright and faithful witnesses. There is no more room to suspect that they had a design to deceive others, than that they were mistaken or deceived themselves. For,

1. If we judge of them by their writings, we must at least allow them to have been well-meaning men. They profess to aim at promoting the knowledge and honour of the true God, and thereby to promote the morality and happiness of mankind. Their conduct was uniformly consistent with their profession, and their doctrines and precepts were evidently suited to answer their design. The penmen of the New Testament were confessedly men in private life, most of them destitute of literature, and engaged in low occupations, till they became the disciples of Jesus. Is it probable that men, who speak so honourably of God, who inculcate upon their fellow-creatures such an entire devotedness to his will and service, should be impostors themselves? Is it at all credible, that a few men, in an obscure situation, should form a consistent and well concerted plan, sufficient to withstand and overcome the prejudices, habits, and customs, both of Jews and Heathens; to institute a new religion, and, without the assistance of interest or arms, to spread it rapidily and successfully in a few years throughout the greatest part of the Roman empire? Or is it possible that such men could, at their first effort, exhibit a scheme of theology and morality, so vastly superior to the united endeavours of the philosophers of all ages? A learned man in France attempted to prove (for what will not learned men attempt?) that most of the Latin poems which are attributed to those whom we call the classic writers, and particularly the Æneid of Virgil, were not the production of the authors whose names they bear, but gross forgeries, fabricated by monks in the dark ages of ignorance, and successfully obtruded upon the world as genuine, till he arose to detect the imposture. He gained but few proselytes to his absurd paradox. Yet, to suppose that men who could only express their own dull sentiments in barbarous Latin, were capable of writing with the fire and elegance of Virgil, when they undertook to impose upon the world; or to affirm that the *Principia* of Sir Isaac Newton was in reality written by an ignorant plowman, and only sent abroad under the sanction of a celebrated name, cannot be more repugnant to true taste, sound judgment, and common sense, than to imagine, that the Evangelists and Apostles were, from their own resources, capable of writing such a book as the New Testament; the whole of which must stand or fall with the doctrine of our Lord's resurrection.

2. But farther, they could not possibly propose any advantage to themselves in their endeavours to propagate the christian religion, if they had not been assured that the crucified Jesus, whom they preached, was risen from the dead, and had taken possession of his kingdom. Knowing whom they had believed, filled with a constraining sense of his love, and depending upon his promise and power to support them in the service to which he had called them, they were neither ashamed nor afraid to proclaim his gospel, and to invite and enjoin sinners every where to put their trust in him; otherwise they had nothing to expect but such treatment as they actually met with, for professing their belief of his resurrection, and especially for the pains they took to publish it, first among the people who had put him to death, and afterwards among the Heathens. It required no great sagacity to foresee that this doctrine would be an offence to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks, 1 Cor. i. 23. They were in fact despised, hated, opposed, and persecuted, wherever they went; and those who espoused their cause were immediately exposed to a participation in their sufferings. Nor was there the least probability that the event could be otherwise. Impostures there have been many; but we cannot conceive that any set of men would deliberately, and by consent, contrive an imposture, which, in the nature of the thing, could procure nothing to them, or to their followers, but contempt, stripes, imprisonment, and death.

3. Even if we could for a moment suppose them capable of so wild and wicked an undertaking, as, under pretence of the service of God, to provoke and dare the hatred of mankind, by asserting and propagating an offensive falsehood, it would be impossible upon that ground to account for the success which they met with. If this counsel and cause had not been of God, it must have come to nought, Acts v. 38. But by preaching Jesus and his resurrection, in defiance of all the arts and rage of their enemies, they mightily prevailed over the established customs and inveterate prejudices of mankind, and brought multitudes into the belief of their doctrine against all disadvantages. The Lord confirmed their word with signs following. The miracles which were wrought in the name of Jesus were numerous, notorious, and undeniable; and the moral effects of their preaching, though too frequent and universal to be styled miraculous, were such as can only be with reason ascribed to a divine power. The pillars of Paganism, the superstitions of idol worship, though in every country connected and incorporated with the frame of civil government, and guarded for ages, not more by popular veneration than for reasons of state,

were very soon shaken, and in no great space of time subverted. Within about two hundred years after Tacitus had described the Christians as the objects of universal contempt and hatred, christianity became the established religion of the empire. And in a letter of Pliny to Trajan on the subject, we have indisputable evidence, that even in the time of Tacitus, hated, vilified, and persecuted, as the Christians were, their religion so greatly prevailed, that in many places the idol temples were almost deserted.

4. But the proof of the resurrection of Christ, which is the most important and satisfactory of any, does not depend upon arguments and historical evidence, with which multitudes of true christians are unacquainted, but is, in its own nature, equally convincing in all ages, and equally level to all capacities. They who have found the gospel to be the power of God to the salvation of their souls, have the witness in themselves; and are very sure that the doctrine, which enlightened their understandings, awakened their conscience, delivered them from the guilt and dominion of sin, brought them into a state of peace and communion with God, and inspired them with a bright and glorious hope of eternal life, must be true. They know that the Lord is risen indeed, because they are made partakers of the power of his resurrection, and have experienced a change in themselves, which could only be wrought by the influence of that Holy Spirit which Jesus is exalted to bestow. And many believers, though not qualified to dispute with philosophers and sceptics upon their own learned ground, can put them to shame and to silence, by the integrity and purity of their conduct, by their patience and cheerfulness under afflictions; and would especially silence them, if they were eye-witnesses of the composure and elevation of spirit with which true believers in a risen Saviour welcome the approach of death.

This is the evidence which I would principally recommend to my hearers to seek after. If the resurrection of Christ be a truth and a fact, much depends upon the right belief of it. I say a right belief; for though I have offered you a brief view of the external evidence in proof of this point, I am aware that I am not preaching to Jews or Mahommedans. If I should ask you, Believest thou the resurrection? Might I not answer myself, as the apostle did on another occasion, "I know that thou believest!" Acts xxvi. 27. But so powerful is the effect of our depravity, that it is possible, yea, very common, for people most certainly to believe the truth of a proposition, so as not to be able to entertain a doubt of it, and yet to act as if they could demonstrate it to be false. Let me ask you, for instance, Do you believe that you shall die? I know that you believe it. But do you indeed live, as if you were really assured of the certainty of death, and (which is equally undeniable) the uncertainty of life? So in the present case—If Christ be risen from the dead according to the scriptures, then all that the scripture declares of the necessity and design of his sufferings, of his present glory, and of his future advent, must be true likewise. What a train of weighty consequences depend upon his resurrection! If he rose from the dead, then he is the Lord of the dead and of the living—then he has the keys of death and hades—then he will return to judge the world, and you must see him for yourself, and appear at his tribunal—then, it is he with whom you have to do—and then, finally, unless you really love, trust, and serve him, unless he is the beloved and the Lord of your heart, your present state is awfully dangerous and miserable.

But let those who love his name be joyful in him: your Lord who was dead, is alive, and because he liveth, you shall live also. If ye be risen with him, seek the things which are above, where he sitteth on the right hand of God. And, when he, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

SERMON XLI.

DEATH BY ADAM, LIFE BY CHRIST.

For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22.

From Mr. Handel's acknowledged abilities as a composer, and particularly from what I have heard of his great taste and success in adapting the style of his music to the subject, I judge that this passage afforded him a fair occasion of displaying his genius and powers. Two ideas, vastly important in themselves, are here represented in the strongest light, by being placed in contrast to each other. Surely the most solemn, the most pathetic strains must be employed, if they accord with the awful words, "By man came death,"—"In Adam all die." Nor can even the highest efforts of the heavenly harpers, more than answer to the joy, the triumph, and the praise which the other part of my text would excite in our hearts, if we are interested in it, provided we were capable of comprehending the full force and meaning of the expressions, "By man came also the resurrection,"—"In Christ shall all be made alive."

By one man came death. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin," Rom. v. 12. Sin opened the door to death. The creation, at the beginning, was full of

order and beauty. "God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good," Gen. i. 31. Adam, happy in the image and favour of his maker, breathed the air of immortality in paradise. While moral evil was unknown, natural evils, such as sickness, pain, and death had no place. How different has the state of things been since! Would you account for the change? Charge it upon man. He sinned against his Creator, Lawgiver, and Benefactor, and thus, by him, came death. The fact is sure, and therefore our reasonings upon it, in order to account for it, farther than we are enlightened and taught by scripture, are unnecessary and vain. God is infinitely wise, and therefore this change was foreseen by him. He doubtless could have prevented it, for to omnipotence every thing that does not imply a contradiction is possible, is easy. But he permitted it, and therefore it must have been agreeable to his wisdom, holiness, and goodness to permit it. He can over-rule it to the purposes of his own glory, and to ends worthy of himself, and he has assured us that he will do so. Thus far I can go, nor do I wish to go farther. And to endeavour to vindicate the ways of God to man, to fallen man, upon the grounds of what he proudly calls his reason, would be an impracticable, and, in my view, a presumptuous attempt. In proportion as his grace enlightens our minds, convinces us of our ignorance, and humbles our pride, we shall be satisfied, that in whatever he appoints or permits, he acts in a manner becoming his own perfections. Nor can we be satisfied in any other way. We see, we feel that evil is in the world. Death reigns. It has pleased God to afford us a revelation, to visit us with the light of his gospel. If, instead of reasoning, we believe and obey, a way is set before us, by which we may finally overcome every evil, and obtain a happiness and honour, superior to what belonged to man in his original state. They who refuse his gospel must be left to their cavils and perplexities, until the day in which the great Judge and Governor of all shall arise to plead his own cause, and to vindicate his proceedings from their arrogant exceptions. Then every mouth will be stopped, Job xxxv. 5. Let us look to the heavens, which are higher than we, and attend to what we may learn from sure principles, that the earth, with all its inhabitants, is but as dust upon the balance, if compared with the immensity of God's creation. Unless we could know the whole, and the relation which this very small part bears to the rest of his government, we must be utterly incompetent to judge how it becomes the great God to act. We are infected with the sin, and we are subject to the death, with all its concomitant evils, which came into the world by the first man. But we are likewise invited to a participation of all the blessings which the second Man has procured, by his atonement for sin, and by his victory over death. "For as by man came death, so by man came also the resurrection from the dead."

Let us take a survey, first of the malady, and then of the remedy.

I. The malady, the effect and wages of sin, is death. Many ideas are included in this word, taken in the scriptural sense.

1. The sentence annexed to the transgression of that commandment which was given as an especial test of Adam's obedience, and which affects all his posterity, is thus expressed, "In the day that thou eatest—thou shalt surely die," Gen. ii. 17. But man was not, ordinarily, to die by a stroke of apoplexy, or by a flash of lightning. The sentence includes all the natural evils, all the variety of woe which sin has brought into the world. The rebellious tempers and appetites which so often cut short the life of man, together with the sufferings and troubles, which, sooner or later, bring him down with sorrow to the grave, being the consequences of sin, may be properly considered as belonging to that death in which they terminate. Even the earth and the elements partook in the effects of man's disobedience. Thorns and thistles were not the produce of the ground till after he had sinned, Gen. iii. 18. Nor can I suppose that hurricanes, floods, and earthquakes were known in a state of innocence. But had the whole earth been a paradise, man having sinned must have been miserable. It is not in situation to make that heart happy, which is the seat of inordinate passions, rage, envy, malice, lust, and avarice. And were the earth a paradise now, it would be stained with blood, and filled with violence, cruelty, and misery, while it is inhabited by sinners. Many persons at present, who dwell in stately houses, and have every thing around them that is suited to gratify and please their senses, know by painful experience, how little happiness these external advantages afford, while their minds are tortured with disappointments and anxiety. Thus the outward afflictions which every where surround and assail the sinner, and the malignant passions, which, like vultures, continually gnaw his heart, all combine to accelerate the execution of the sentence of death.

2. Death, in a very important sense, entered immediately with sin. Besides the rational life which still distinguishes man from the brute creation, he originally possessed a spiritual and divine life, for he was created in the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness. He was capable of communion with God, of rejoicing in his favour, and of proposing his will and glory as the great end of his actions. In a word, the presence and life of God dwelt in him as in a temple. As the soul is the life of the body, which becomes

a carcase, a prey to worms and putrefaction, when the soul has forsaken it, so God is the life of the soul. Sin defaced his temple, and he forsook it. In this sense, when Adam had transgressed the law, he died instantly, in that very day, in that very moment. He lost his spiritual life, he lost all desire for communion with God, he no longer retained any love for his benefactor. He dreaded his presence, he sought to hide himself from him, and when obliged to appear and answer, stood self-condemned before him, till revived and restored by the promise of grace. And thus his posterity derive from him what may be called a living death. They are dead while they live, dead in trespasses and sins, (Eph. ii. 1,) till they are again quickened by his Holy Spirit. This is not a subject of common-place declamation; it is to be proved by the tenor of scripture, the nature of redemption, and the very reason of things. Unless we allow that man in his present state is thus fallen, depraved, and dead, we must be reduced to the absurdity of supposing that God made him such a creature as he now is; that when he formed him for himself, and endued him with a capacity and desires which nothing short of his own infinite goodness can satisfy, he should at the same time create him with a disposition to hate his Maker, to seek his satisfaction in sensuality upon a level with the brutes, and to confine his views and pursuits within the limits of this precarious life, while he feels, in defiance of himself, an instinctive thirst for immortality. Man, considered in this view, would be a solecism in the creation; and they who do not acquiesce in the cause which the scripture assigns for the inconsistences and contradictions which are found in his character, will never be able to assign any other cause, which will bear the trial of sober and rational examination. What the poet says of Beelzebub, "majestic though in ruins," may be truly affirmed of man. His faculties and powers are proofs of his original greatness; his awful misapplication of them equally prove that he is a fallen and ruined creature. He has lost his true life, he is dead in sin; and unless renewed and revived by the grace of God, can only, in a future state, be fit for the company of the fallen angels.

3. Death, as the wages of sin, extends still farther. There is the second death, the final and eternal misery of soul and body in hell. This we know is the dreadful lot of the impenitent. We need no other proof that this was included in the sentence; for certainly, the righteous Judge would not inflict a greater punishment than he had denounced. Indeed, it follows of course in the very nature of things, if we admit the soul to be immortal, a resurrection both of the just and the unjust, and that there remain no other sacrifice for sin, in favour of those who reject the gospel. For to be disowned of God in the great day, to be separated from his favourable presence, and conscious of his endless displeasure; to be abandoned to the unrestrained rage of sinful dispositions and hopeless despair; to be incessantly tormented by the stings of a remorseful conscience, must be, upon the principles of scripture, the unavoidable consequences of being cut off by death, in an unhumbled, unpardoned, unsanctified state.

II. But, blessed be God, the gospel reveals a relief and remedy fully adapted to the complicated misery in which sin has involved us. "As by man came death, by man came also the resurrection from the dead." Messiah has made an end of sin, and destroyed the power of death. They who believe in him, though they were dead shall live. John xi. 25. For he is the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the living.

1. He raises the soul from the death of sin unto a life of righteousness. By his blood he procures a right and liberty, and by his Spirit he communicates a power, that those who were afar off, may draw nigh to God. Thus, even at present, believers are said to be risen with him, Col. iii. 1. Their spiritual life is renewed, and their happiness is already commenced, though it be as yet subject to abatements.

(1.) Though when they are made partakers of his grace, and thereby delivered from the condemning power of the law, sin has no longer dominion over them, as formerly; yet it still wars and strives within them, and their life is a state of continual warfare. They now approve the law of God, as holy, just, and good, and delight in it after the inward man, (Rom. vii. 12—19,) yet they are renewed but in part. They feel a law in their members warring against the law of their minds. They cannot do the things that they would, nor as they would; for when they would do good, evil is present with them. They are conscious of a defect and a defilement attending their best services. Their attainments are unspeakably short of the desires which love to the Redeemer has raised in their hearts. They are ashamed, and sometimes almost discouraged. They adopt the apostle's language, "Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? But with him they can likewise say, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." They know he is on their side, and expect that he will at last make them more than conquerors: yet, while the conflict lasts, they have much to suffer, and much to lament.

(2.) They are subject, like other people, to the various calamities and distresses incident to this state of mortality; and they have, more or less, troubles peculiar to themselves, arising from the nature of their profession and conduct (if they are faithful to their Lord) while they live in a world that lieth in

wickedness. But the curse and sting is taken out of their afflictions, and they are so moderated and sanctified by the wisdom and grace of him whom they serve, that in the event they work for their good. But though they yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness, (Heb. xii. 11,) in themselves, and at the time, they are not joyous, but grievous.

(3.) They are still subject to the stroke of death, the separation of soul and body. But this death has lost its sting as to them. And therefore they are said not to die, but to sleep in Jesus. Death is not their enemy, but their friend. To them, instead of being an evil, it proves a deliverance from all evil, and an entrance into everlasting life.

2. That new life to which they are raised is surely connected with life eternal; the life of grace, with the life of glory. For Christ liveth in them, and being united to him by faith, they shall live while he liveth. They only shut their eyes upon the pains and sorrows of this world, to open them immediately in his presence, and so they shall be for ever with the Lord. How wonderful and happy is the transition! From disease and anguish, from weeping friends, and often from a state of indigence and obscurity, in which they have no friends to compassionate them, they remove to a state of glory, honour, and immortality, to a mansion in the realms of light, to a seat near the throne of God. In the language of mortals, this ineffable honour, and happiness is shadowed out to us, by the emblems of a white robe, a golden harp, a palm-branch (the token of victory,) and a crown, not of oak or laurel, of gold or diamonds, but a crown of life. Such honour have all the saints. However afflicted or neglected, despised or oppressed, while upon earth, soon as their willing spirits take their flight from hence, they shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Thus Lazarus lay for a time, diseased, necessitous, and slighted, at the rich man's gate. Yet he was not without attendants. A guard of angels waited around him, and when he died conveyed his spirit into Abraham's bosom, Luke xvi. 22. The Jews thought very highly of Abraham, the father of their nation, the father of the faithful. Our Lord therefore teaches us by this representation, that the beggar Lazarus was not only happy after death, but highly exalted by him who seeth not as man seeth; for he was placed in Abraham's bosom, a situation which, according to the custom of the Jews, was a mark of peculiar favour, intimacy, and distinction. Thus the beloved disciple was seated in the bosom of our Lord, when he celebrated his last passover with his disciples, John xiii. 22—25.

3. Their dead bodies shall be raised at the great day, not in their former state of weakness and corruption, but that which was sown in weakness shall be raised in power, and the mortal shall put on immortality. He shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned according to the likeness of his own glorious body. So that his own resurrection is both the pledge and the pattern of theirs. I have only farther to observe upon this subject at present, that as Adam is the root and head of all mankind, from whence they all derive a sinful and mortal nature; so Jesus, the second Adam, is the root of a people who are united to him, planted and engrafted in him by faith. To these the resurrection, considered as a blessing, is to be restrained. There will be a resurrection of the wicked likewise, (John v. 29,) but to condemnation, shame and everlasting contempt, Dan. xii. 2. But the connexion is close and indissoluble between Christ, the first-fruits, and them that are Christ's at his coming.

May we be happily prepared for this great event, that when he shall appear we may have confidence in him, and not be ashamed before him, 1 John ii. 28. Happy they who shall then be able to welcome him in the language of the prophet, "Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation, Isa. xxv. 9. But how awful the contrast of those (many of them once the great, mighty, and honourable of the earth) who shall behold him with horror, and in the anguish of their souls shall call (in vain) to the rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from his presence, saying, "The great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" Rev. vi. 16, 17.

SERMON XLII.

THE GENERAL RESURRECTION.

Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.

An object in itself great, and which we know to be so, will appear small to us if we view it from a distance. The stars, for example, in our view, are but as little specks or points of light; and the tip of a finger, if held very near to the eye, is sufficient to hide from us the whole body of the sun. Distance of time has an effect upon us, in its kind, similar to distance of space. It diminishes in our mind the idea of what we are assured is, in its own nature, of great magnitude and

importance. If any of us were informed that we should certainly die before this day closes, what a sudden and powerful change would take place in our thoughts? That we all must die, is a truth, of which we are no less certain, than that we are now alive. But because it is possible that we may not die to-day, or to-morrow, or this year, or for several years to come, we are often little more affected by the thoughts of death, than if we expected to live here for ever. In like manner, if you receive the scripture as a divine revelation, I need offer you no other proof, that there is a day, a great day, approaching, which will put an end to the present state of things, and introduce a state unchangeable and eternal. Then the Lord will descend with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trump of God. The earth and all its works will be burnt up. The great Judge will appear, the tribunal be fixed, the books opened, and all the human race must give an account of themselves to God, and, according to his righteous award, be happy or miserable in a degree beyond expression or conception, and that for ever.

If we were infallibly assured, that this tremendous scene would open upon us to-morrow; or if, while I am speaking, we should be startled with the signs of our Lord's coming in the air, what confusion and alarm would overspread the congregation? Yet, if the scripture be true, the hour is approaching, when we must all be spectators of this solemn event, and parties nearly interested in it. But because it is at a distance, we can hear of it, speak of it, and profess to expect it, with a coolness almost equal to indifference. May the Lord give us that faith which is the evidence of things not seen, that while I aim to lead your meditations to the subject of my text, we may be duly impressed by it: and that we may carry from hence such a consideration of our latter end, as may incline our hearts to that which is our true wisdom!

Many curious inquiries and speculations might be started from this passage, but which, because I judge them to be more curious than useful, it is my intention to wave. I shall confine myself to what is plainly expressed, because I wish rather to profit than to amuse my hearers. The principal subject before us is the resurrection of the dead, in the most pleasing view of it; for my text speaks only of those who shall change the mortal and corruptible, for incorruption and immortality.

I. The introduction,—"Behold I show you a mystery."

II. What we are taught to expect,—"We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed."

III. The suddenness of the event,—"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye."

IV. The grand preceding signal,—"The trumpet shall sound."

I. The apostle apprizes the Corinthians that he is about to show them a mystery. As the word mystery has been treated with no small contempt, I shall embrace this occasion of offering you a short explanation of it, as it is used in the scriptures. We are allowed to say, that there are mysteries in nature, and perhaps we may be allowed to speak of mysteries in providence; but though an apostle assures us, that great is the mystery of godliness, (1 Tim. iii. 16,) many persons will scarcely bear the application of the word to religion. And, a late ingenious writer, who has many admirers in the present day, has ventured to affirm in print, that where mystery begins, religion ends. If the frequency of the case did not, in some degree, abate our wonder, this might seem almost a mystery, that any persons who profess to believe the scripture, should so openly and flatly contradict what the scripture expressly and repeatedly declares: or that while, as men of reason and philosophy, they are forced to acknowledge a mystery in every part of creation, and must confess it beyond their ability to explain the growth of a blade of grass; they should, in opposition to all the rules of analogy, conclude, that the gospel, the most important concern of man, and which is commended to us as the most eminent display of the wisdom and power of God, is the only subject so level to our apprehensions, as to be obvious, at first sight, to the most careless and superficial observers. That great numbers of people are very far from being accurate and diligent in their religious inquiries, is too evident to be denied. How often do we meet with persons of sense who talk with propriety on philosophical, political, or commercial subjects, and yet, when they speak of religion, discover such gross ignorance, as would be shameful in a child of ten years old, and amounts to a full proof that they have not thought it worth their while to acquire even a slight knowledge of its first principles. Can we even conceive the possibility of a divine revelation that should have nothing in it mysterious to persons of this character?

A mystery, according to the notation of the Greek word, signifies a secret. And all the peculiar truths of the gospel may justly be styled mysteries or secrets, for two reasons.

1. Because the discovery of them is beyond the reach of fallen man, and they neither would nor could have been known without a revelation from God. This is eminently true of the resurrection. The light of nature, which we often hear so highly commended, may afford some faint glimmerings of a future state, but gives no intimation of a resurrection. The men of wisdom at Athens, the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers, who differed widely in most parts of their respective

schemes, united in deriding this sentiment, and contemptuously styled the apostle Paul a babbler, (Acts xvii. 18,) for preaching it. But this secret is to us made known. And we are assured, not only that the Lord will receive to himself the departing spirits of his people, but that he will give commandment concerning their dust, and, in due time, raise their vile bodies to a conformity with his own glorious body.

2. Because, though they are revealed expressly in the scripture, such is the grossness of our conceptions, and the strength of our prejudices, that the truths of revelation are still unintelligible to us, without a farther revelation of their true sense to the mind, by the influence of his Holy Spirit. Otherwise, how can the secret of the Lord be restrained to those who fear him, (Psal. xxv. 14,) when the book which contains it is open to all, and the literal and grammatical meaning of the words is in the possession of many who fear him not!

Books in the arts and sciences may be said to be full of mysteries to those who have not a suitable capacity and taste for them: or who do not apply themselves to study them with diligence, and patiently submit to learn gradually one thing after another. If you put a treatise on mathematics, or a system of music, into the hands of a plowman or labourer, you will not be surprised to find that he cannot understand a single page. Shall the works of a Sir Isaac Newton, or of a Handel, be thus inexplicable to one person, while another peruses them with admiration and delight? Shall these require a certain turn of mind, and a close attention? and can it be reasonably supposed, that the Bible is the only book that requires no peculiar disposition, or degree of application, to be understood, though it is designed to make us acquainted with the deep things of God? 1 Cor. ii. 10. In one respect, indeed, there is an encouraging difference. Divine truths lie thus far equally open to all, that though none can learn them unless they are taught of God, yet all who are sensible of their own weakness may expect his teaching, if they humbly seek it by prayer. Many people are, perhaps, incapable of being mathematicians. They have not a genius for the science. But there is none who teacheth like God. He can give not only light, but sight; not only lessons, but the capacity necessary for their reception. And while his mysteries are hidden from the wise and prudent, who are too proud to wait upon him for instruction, he reveals them unto babes.

It may perhaps be thought, that a belief of the doctrine of the resurrection does not require the same teaching of the Holy Spirit that is necessary to the right knowledge of some other doctrines of the gospel. But such a belief as may affect, cheer, and animate the heart must be given us from above, for we cannot reason ourselves into it. Nay, this divine teaching is necessary to secure the mind from the vain reasonings, perplexities, and imaginations which will bewilder our thoughts upon the subject, unless we learn to yield, in simplicity of faith, to what the scripture has plainly revealed, and can be content to know no farther before the proper time.

II. What we are here taught to expect is thus expressed—"We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." We are not to suppose that the whole human race will die, and fail from the earth, before the resurrection. Some will be living at the time, and among them some of the Lord's people. Of the living, it cannot properly be said that they will be raised from the dead: but they will experience a change, which will put them exactly in the same state with the others. Their mortality shall be swallowed up in life. Thus we conceive it to have been with Enoch and Elijah. They did not die like other men; but their mortal natures were frail and sinful, like ours, and incapable of sustaining the glories of heaven without a preparation. Flesh and blood in its present state cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither can corruption inherit incorruption; but the dead shall arise, and the living shall be changed. Here is a wide field for speculation, but I mean not to enter it. Curiosity would be glad to know how our bodies, when changed, shall still be the same. Let us first determine how that body, which was once an infant, is the very same when it becomes a full grown man, or a man in extreme old age. Let us explain the transmutation of a caterpillar or silk-worm, which from a reptile becomes a butterfly. What a wonderful change is this both in appearance and in powers? Who would suppose it to be the same creature? Yet who can deny it? It is safest and most comfortable for us, to refer to the wisdom and power of God the accomplishment of his own word.

III. These great events will take place unexpectedly and suddenly—"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." We have reason to believe, that a part at least of mankind will be employed as they are now, and as they were in the days of Noah and Lot, (Luke xvii. 26—30,) eating and drinking, buying and selling, building, and planting; having nothing less in their thoughts than the calamity and destruction which shall overwhelm them without warning. For while they are promising themselves peace, the day of the Lord shall come upon them like a thief in the night, unlooked for, and like the pangs of a labouring woman, unavoidable. "In that day the lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of man shall be bowed down, and the Lord

alone shall be exalted," Isa. ii. 6. So large a part of divine prophecy remains yet to be fulfilled, that I apprehend it is not probable that any of us shall be alive when this great and terrible day of the Lord shall be revealed. But are not some of us exposed to a similar dreadful surprise! If you die in your sins, the consequences will be no less deplorable to you, than if you saw the whole frame of nature perishing with you. Alas, what will you do, whither will you flee for help, or where will you leave your glory, if, while you are engrossed by the cares or pleasures of this world, death should arrest you, and summon you to judgment! The rich man in the gospel is not charged with any crimes of peculiar enormity. It is not said that he ground the faces of the poor, or that he, by fraud or oppression, kept back the hire of the labourers who had reaped his harvest; he only rejoiced in his wealth, and in having much goods laid up for many years, and that therefore he might securely eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee," Luke xii. 20. Awful disappointment! Thus will it be, sooner or later, with all whose hearts and portions are in this world, but not rich towards God! Consider this, you that are like minded with him. Tremble at the thought of being found in the number of those who have all their consolation here, and who, when they die, must leave their all behind them. Now is the acceptable time, the day of salvation. Now, if you will seek the Lord, he will be found of you. Now, if you pray for grace and faith, he will answer you. But when once the Master of the house shall arise, and with his own sovereign authoritative hand shall shut the door of his mercy, it will then be in vain, and too late to say, "Lord, Lord, open unto us," Luke xiii. 25.

IV. The great scene will be introduced by a signal—"At the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound." Thus the approach of a king or a judge is usually announced; and the scripture frequently borrows images from our little affairs and customs, and, in condescension to our weakness, illustrates things in themselves too great for our conceptions, by comparing them with those which are more familiar to us.

It will indeed be comparing great things with small, if I attempt to illustrate this sublime idea, by local customs which obtain in this kingdom. At a time of assize, when the judges, to whom the administration and guardianship of our laws are entrusted, are making their entrance, expectation is awake, and a kind of reverence and awe is felt, even by those who are not immediately concerned in their inquest. The dignity of their office, the purpose for which they come, the concourse of people, the order of the procession, and the sound of the trumpet, all concur in raising an emotion in the hearts of the spectators. Happy are they then upon whom the inflexible law has no demand! But who can describe the terror with which the sound of the trumpet is heard by the unhappy criminal; and the throbbings of his heart, if he be already convicted in his own conscience, and knows or fears, that there is sufficient evidence at hand to fix the fact upon him, and to prove his guilt! For soon the judge will take his seat, the books will be opened, the cause tried, and the criminal sentenced. Many circumstances of this kind are alluded to in the scripture, to assist us in forming some conception of what will take place, when all the race of Adam, small and great, shall stand before the sovereign Judge, the one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. But the concourse, the solemnity, the scrutiny, the event, in the most weighty causes that can come before a human judicature, are mere shadows, and trivial as the sports of children, if compared with the business of this tremendous tribunal. "The Lord himself will descend with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God." What a trumpet will that be, whose sound shall dissolve the frame of nature, and awaken the dead? When the Lord is seated upon his great white throne, (Rev. xx. 11,) the heavens and the earth shall flee from his presence; but the whole race of mankind shall be assembled before him, each one to give an account of himself, to him, from whose penetrating knowledge no secret can be hidden, and from whose unerring inflexible sentence there can be no appeal. "Where then shall the wicked and the ungodly appear?"

But it will be a joyful day to believers: they shall be separated as the wheat from the tares, and arranged at his right hand. When the Lord shall come, attended by his holy angels, his redeemed people will reassume their bodies, refined and freed from all that was corruptible; and those of them who shall be then living will be changed, and caught up to meet him in the air. He will then own them, approve and crown them, before assembled worlds. Every charge that can be brought against them will be over-ruled, and their plea, that they trusted in him for salvation, be admitted and ratified. They will be accepted and justified. They will shine like the sun in his full train, and attend, as assessors with him, when he shall pass final judgment upon his and their enemies. Then he will be admired in and by them that believe. Their tears will be for ever wiped away, when he shall say to them, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," Matt. xxv. 34.

Beloved, if these things are so, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy

conversation and godliness? 2 Pet. iii. 11. Should we not give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, that we may be found of him in peace? He who will then be seated upon the throne of judgment, is to us made known as seated upon a throne of grace. It is time, it is high time, and blessed be God it is not yet too late, to seek his mercy. Still the gospel invites us to hear his voice, and to humble ourselves before him. Once more you are invited, some of you perhaps for the last time: how know you but sickness or death may be at the very door? Consider, Are you prepared? Examine the foundation of your hope,—and do it quickly, impartially, and earnestly, lest you should be cut off in an hour when you are not aware, and perish with a lie in your right hand.

SERMON XLIII.

DEATH SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY.

Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.—1 Cor. xv. 54.

Death, simply considered, is no more than a private idea, signifying a cessation of life, or that what was once living lives no longer. But it has been the general, perhaps the universal custom of mankind to personify it. Imagination gives death a formidable appearance, arms it with a dart, sting, or scythe, and represents it as an active, inexorable, and invincible reality. In this view Death is a great devourer; with his iron tongue he calls for thousands at a meal. He has already swallowed up all the preceding generations of men; all who are now living are marked as his inevitable prey; he is still unsatisfied, and will go on devouring till the Lord shall come. Then this destroyer shall be destroyed; he shall swallow no more, but be swallowed up himself in victory. Thus the scripture accommodates itself to the language and apprehensions of mortals. Farther, the metaphorical usage of the word *swallow* still enlarges and aggrandizes the idea. Thus the earth is said to have opened her mouth and swallowed up Korah and his accomplices. Numb. xvi. 32. And thus a pebble, a millstone, or a mountain, if cast into the ocean, would be swallowed up, irrecoverably lost and gone, as though they had never been, Rev. xviii. 21. Such shall be the triumphant victory of Messiah in the great day of the consummation of all things. Death in its cause and in its effects, shall be utterly destroyed. Man was created upright, and lived in a paradise, till, by sin, he brought death into the world. From that time death has reigned by sin, and evils abound. But Messiah came to make an end of sin, to destroy death, and him that hath the power of it, to repair every disorder, and to remove every misery; and he will so fully, so gloriously accomplish his great undertaking in the final issue, that every thing contrary to holiness and happiness shall be swallowed up and buried beyond the possibility of a return, as a stone that is sunk in the depths of the sea. Thus where sin hath abounded, grace will much more abound.

This victory, however, being the Redeemer's work, and the fruit of his mediation, the scripture teaches us to restrain the benefits of it to the subjects of his church and kingdom. In Adam all die. A depraved nature, guilt, sorrow, and death, extend to all his posterity. The All, who in Christ shall be made alive, are those who, by faith in him, are delivered from the sting of death, which is sin, and are made partakers of a new nature. There is a second death, which, though it shall not hurt the believers in Jesus, (Rev. ii. 11,) will finally swallow up the impenitent and ungodly. We live in an age when there is, if I may so speak, a resurrection of many old and exploded errors, which though they have been often refuted and forgotten, are admired and embraced by some persons as new and wonderful discoveries. Of this stamp, is the conceit of a universal restitution to a state of happiness of all intelligent creatures, whether angels or men, who have rebelled against the will and government of God. This sentiment contradicts the current doctrine of scripture, which asserts the everlasting misery of the finally impenitent, in as strong terms, in the very same terms, as the eternal happiness of the righteous, and sometimes in the very same verse, Matt. xxv. 46. Nor can it possibly be true, if our Lord spake the truth concerning Judas, when he said, "It had been good for that man if he had never been born," Matt. xxvi. 24. If I could consider this notion as harmless though useless, and no worse than many mistakes which men of upright minds have made, through inattention and weakness of judgment, I should not have mentioned it. But I judge it to be little less pernicious and poisonous, than false. It directly tends to abate that sense of the evil of sin, of the inflexible justice of God, and the truth of his threatenings, which is but too weak in the best of men. Let us abide by the plain declarations of his word, which assures us, that there remaineth no other sacrifice for sin, (Heb. x. 26, 27,) no future relief against it, for those who now refuse the gospel; and that they who cordially receive it shall be saved with an everlasting salvation, and shall one day sing, "Death is swallowed up in victory."

I would farther observe, that many prophecies have a gradual and increasing accomplishment, and may be applied to several periods; though their full completion will only be at the resurrection and last judgment. This passage, as it stands in the prophecy of Isaiah, (chap. xxv. 8,) from whence the apostle quotes it, appears to have a reference to the comparatively brighter light and glory of the gospel-state beyond what was enjoyed by the church under the Levitical dispensation; and especially to the privileges of those happy days, when the fulness of the Gentiles, and the remnant of Israel shall be brought in, and the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ. I would not exclude these subordinate senses; I have already considered them. But my text calls our attention to the end of all things. Then, in the most emphatical sense, Death will be swallowed up of victory.

Let us endeavour to realize the great scene before us, to contemplate the redeemed of the Lord when they shall return with him to animate their glorious bodies. Let us ask the question which the elder proposed to John, "Who are these clothed with white robes, and whence came they?" Rev. vii. 13. They came out of great tribulation, they were once under the power of death, but now death, as to them, is swallowed up in victory. In every sense in which death ruled over them they are now completely delivered.

I. They were once dead in law. They had revolted from their Maker. They had violated the holy order of his government, and stood exposed to his righteous displeasure, and to the heavy penalty annexed to the transgression of his commandments. But mercy interposed. God so loved them, that he gave his only begotten Son to make an atonement for their sins, and to be their wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, 1 Cor. i. 30. They received grace to believe in this Saviour, and now they are delivered from condemnation. They are accepted in the Beloved. They are considered as one with him, and interested in all that he did, and in all that he suffered. Now they are the children of God, and heirs of his kingdom. Though they were afar off, they are brought nigh, and admitted to a nearer relation than the holy angels, to him who sitteth upon the throne. For he took upon him, and still he pleased to wear, not the nature of angels, but the human nature. Their former guilt is cancelled, blotted out, and swallowed up. All their sins are covered. Sunk in his precious blood as in a deep sea, so that even if sought for, they can no more be found. That they have sinned, will always be a truth; and probably they will never lose a consciousness of what they were by nature and practice while in this world. But this, so far from abating their joy, will heighten their gratitude and praise to him who loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood, Rev. i. 5. Their happiness principally consists in a perception of his love to them, and in their returns of grateful love to him. And they love him much, because for his sake, much has been forgiven them, Luke vii. 47.

II. Once they were dead in sin. They were destitute of the knowledge and love of God. They were foolish, deceived, and disobedient, enslaved to divers lusts, (Titus iii. 3,) to inordinate, sensual, unsatisfying pleasures. They lived in malice and envy; they were hateful, and they hated one another. In a word, they were dead while they lived, 1 Tim. v. 6. But by the power of grace they were awakened and raised from this death, and made partakers of a new, a spiritual, and divine life. Yet the principle of sin and death still remained in them, and their life upon earth, though a life of faith in the Son of God, was a state of continual warfare. They had many a conflict, and were often greatly distressed. They sowed in tears, to the end of their pilgrimage, but now they reap in joy, Psalm cxxvi. 5. This death is also swallowed up in victory. They are now entirely and for ever freed from every clog, defect, and defilement. By beholding their Lord as he is, in all his glory and love, without any interposing veil or cloud, they are made like him, and to the utmost measure of their capacity conformed to his image. Now they are absolutely spotless and impeachable; for though mutability seems no less essential to a creature than dependence, yet they cannot change, because their Lord is unchangeable, for their life is hidden with Christ in God, Col. iii. 3. They cannot fall from their holiness or happiness, because he has engaged to uphold and maintain them by his almighty power.

III. One branch of the death due to sin is the tyranny and power of Satan. For a time he ruled in their hearts, as in his own stronghold; and while they were blinded by his influence they were little affected with their bondage. Hard as his service was, they did not often complain of it. They were led by him according to his will for the most part without resistance, or, if they attempted to resist, they found it was in vain. But in his own hour their Lord, who had bought them, dispossessed their strong enemy, and claimed their hearts for himself. Yet after they were thus set free from his ruling power, this adversary was always plotting and fighting against them. How much have some of them suffered from his subtle wiles and his fiery darts! from his rage as a roaring lion, from his cunning as a serpent lying in their path, and from his attempts to deceive them under

the semblance of an angel of light! 2 Cor. xi. 14. But now they are placed out of his reach. Death and Satan are swallowed up. The victory is complete. The wicked one shall never have access to touch or disturb them any more. Now he is shut up in his own place, and the door sealed, no more to open. While he was permitted to vex and worry them, he acted under a limited commission which he could not exceed; all was directed and over-ruled by the wisdom and love of their Lord for their advantage. Such exercises were necessary, then, to discover to them more of the weakness and vileness of their own hearts, to make them more sensible of their dependence upon their Saviour, and to afford them affecting proofs of his power and care engaged in their behalf. But they are necessary no longer. Their warfare is finished. They are now where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest, Job iii. 17.

IV. While they were in the world, they had a share, many of them a very large share, of the woes and sufferings incident to this mortal state: which, as they are the fruits and effects of sin, and greatly contribute to shorten the life of man, and hasten his return to dust, are, as I formerly observed, properly included in the comprehensive meaning of the original sentence, death. They belong to its train, and are harbingers of its approach. None of the race of Adam are exempted from these; but especially the servants of God have no exemption. Their gracious Lord, who frees them from condemnation, and gives them peace in himself, assures them that in this world they shall have tribulation, John xvi. 33. This is so inseparable from their calling, that it is mentioned as one special mark of their adoption and sonship, Heb. xii. 6—8. If the prosperity of the wicked sometimes continues for a season without interruption, their day is coming, (Psal. xxxvii. 13;) but the righteous may expect chastisement and discipline daily. Thus their graces are refined, strengthened, and displayed, to the praise of their heavenly Father. There is no promise in the Bible that secures the most eminent and exemplary believer from participating in the heaviest calamities in common with others, and they have many trials peculiar to themselves. Thus, while upon earth, they endure hardship for his sake. Because he chose them out of the world, and they would no longer comply with its sinful maxims and customs, the world hated them, John xv. 19. Many of them were the mark of public scorn and malice, accounted the offscouring of all things; they were driven to deserts, and mountains, and caves; they suffered stripes, imprisonment, and death. Others had trials of pains, sickness, and poverty, of sharp bereaving dispensations. Their gourds withered, and the desire of their eyes was taken away with a stroke. They had fightings without, and fears within. So that if their pressures and troubles were considered, without taking into the account their inward supports and the consolation they derived from their hopes beyond the grave, they might be deemed of all men the most miserable, 1 Cor. xv. 19. But they were supported under these exercises, brought safely through them, and now their sorrows are swallowed up in victory. Now the days of their mourning are ended, Is. lx. 17. They now confess, that their longest afflictions were momentary, and their heaviest burdens were light, in comparison of that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, (2 Cor. iv. 17,) which they have entered upon. Sorrow and sighing have taken their everlasting flight, and joy and gladness have come forth to meet them, and to dwell with them for ever, Is. li. 11.

V. In their collective capacity, the seeds of sin often produced bitter fruits. Through remaining ignorance and prejudice, they often mistook and misunderstood one another. They lost much good which they might otherwise have enjoyed, and brought upon themselves many evils. Through their intemperate heats and unsanctified zeal, which divided them into little parties and separate interests, the children of the same family, the members of the same body, were too often at variance, or at least cold and distant in their regards to each other. Yea, Satan could foment discord and jealousies among those who lived in the same house, or met at the same table of the Lord. But now grace has triumphed over every evil; sin and death are swallowed up in victory. Now all is harmony, love, and joy. They have one heart and one song, which will never more be blemished by the harshness of a single discordant note.

May this prospect animate our hopes, and awaken, in those who have hitherto been afar off, a desire of sharing in the happiness of the redeemed! Awful will be the contrast to those who have had their portion in this world! Is it needful to address any in this auditory, in the language which our Lord used to his impenitent hearers? "Wo unto you that are rich; for you have received your consolation. Wo unto you that are full; for ye shall hunger. Wo unto you that laugh now; for ye shall mourn and weep!" Luke vi. 24, 25. When the rich man, who had lived in honour and affluence here, was torn from all that he loved, and lifted up his eyes in torment, the remembrance of his former state, that he once had his good things, (Luke xvi. 25,) but that they were gone, for ever gone, could only be a keen aggravation of his misery. Dreadful will be the condition of all who die in their sins; but the case of those

who are now frequently envied by the ignorant, in the view of a mind enlightened by the truth, must appear doubly and peculiarly pitiable. They have the most to lose, they have the most to account for. Alas, how terrible, how sudden the change! From a state of honour and influence amongst men, to fall in a moment under the contempt and displeasure of the holy God—to pass, from a crowd of dependents and flatterers, to the company of Satan and his angels; from grandeur and opulence, to a state of utter darkness and horror, where the worm dieth not, and the fire cannot be quenched, Mark ix. 44, 46, 48. These are sensible images, it is true; the things of the unseen world cannot be described to us as they are in themselves; but we may be certain that the description falls unspeakably short of the reality. The malicious insults of the powers of darkness, the mutual recriminations of those who, having been connected in sin here, will be some way connected in misery hereafter, (Matt. xiii. 30.)—remorse, rage, despair, a total and final exclusion from God the fountain of happiness, with an abiding sense of his indignation:—this complicated misery cannot be expressed in the language of mortals—like the joy of the blessed, it is more than eye hath seen, or ear hath heard, or can possibly enter into the heart of man to conceive, 1 Cor. ii. 9. Add the ideas of unchangeable and eternal to the rest, that it will be a misery admitting of no intermission, abatement, or end; and then seriously consider, what can it profit a man should he gain the whole world, if at last he should thus lose his soul? Matt. xvi. 26. No longer make a mock at sin: it is not a small evil; it is a great evil in itself, and, unless pardoned and forsaken, will be productive of tremendous consequences. No longer make light of the gospel: it points out to you the only possible method of escaping the damnation of hell. To refuse it, is to rush upon remediless destruction. No longer trust in uncertain riches: if you possess them, I need not tell you they do not make you happy at present, much less will they comfort you in the hour of death, or profit you in the day of wrath, Prov. xi. 4. Waste not your time and talents (which must be accounted for) in the pursuit of sensual pleasure; in the end it will bite like a serpent. For all these things God will assuredly bring you into judgment, unless in this day of grace you humble yourselves to implore that mercy which is still proposed to you, if you will seek it sincerely and with your whole heart; and which I once more entreat, charge, and adjure you to seek, by the great name of Messiah, the Saviour, by his agonies and bloody sweat, by his cross and passion, by his precious death, and by the consideration of his future glorious appearance, to subdue all things to himself.

SERMON XLIV.

TRIUMPH OVER DEATH AND THE GRAVE.

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Cor. xv. 55—57.

The christian soldier may, with the greatest propriety, be said to war a good warfare, 1 Tim. i. 18. He is engaged in a good cause; he fights under the eye of the Captain of his salvation. Though he be weak in himself, and though his enemies are many and mighty, he may do that which in other soldiers would be presumption, and has often been the cause of a defeat; he may triumph while he is in the heat of battle, and assure himself of victory before the conflict is actually decided; for the Lord, his great Commander, fights for him, goes before him, and treads his enemies under his feet. Such a persuasion, when solidly grounded upon the promises and engagement of a faithful unchangeable God, is sufficient, it should seem, to make a coward bold. True christians are not cowards; yet, when they compare themselves with their adversaries, they see much reason for fear and suspicion on their own parts; but when they look to their Saviour, they are enlightened, strengthened, and comforted. They consider who he is, what he has done; that the battle is not so much theirs as his; that he is their strength and their shield, and that his honour is concerned in the event of the war. Thus out of weakness they are made strong; and however pressed and opposed, they can say, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us!" Rom. viii. 37. The whole power of the opposition against them is summed up in the words Sin and Death: but these enemies are already weakened and disarmed. It is sin that furnished death with his sting; a sting sharpened and strengthened by the law. But Jesus, by his obedience unto death, has made an end of sin, and has so fulfilled and satisfied the law on their behalf, that death is deprived of its sting, and can no longer hurt them. They may therefore meet it with confidence, and say, "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

We have here two unspeakably different views to take of the same subject,—Death armed with its formidable sting; and Death rendered harmless, and its aspect softened, by the removal of the sting.

I. The first is a very awful subject: I entreat your attention. I am not now about to speak upon a point of speculation. It is a

personal, a home concern to us all. For we must all die. But should any of you feel not only the stroke, but the sting of death when you leave this world, it were better for you that you had never been born.

The love of life, and consequently a reluctance to that dissolution of the intimate union between soul and body, which we call death, seems natural to man. But, if there was no hereafter, no state of judgment and retribution to be expected; if there was no consciousness of guilt, no foreboding of consequences upon the mind; if we only considered death as inevitable, and had no apprehensions beyond it; death would be divested of its principal terrors. We see that when conscience is stupified, or when the mind is poisoned with infidelity, many people, notwithstanding the natural love of life, are so disgusted with its disappointments, that a fit of impatience, or the dread of contempt, often prevails on them to rush upon death by an act of their own will; or to hazard it in a duel, rather than be suspected of wanting what they account spirit. But death has a sting, though they perceive it not till they feel it, till they are stung by it past recovery.

But usually, and where the heart is not quite hardened, men are unwilling and afraid to die. They have some apprehension of the sting. Death can sting at a distance. How often and how greatly does the fear of death poison and embitter all the comforts of life, even in the time of health! Perhaps some of you well know this to be true. But in health people can in some measure run away from themselves, if I may so speak. They fly to business, company, and amusements, to hide themselves from their own reflections. Their fears are transient, occasional, and partial; they would tremble indeed, if they knew all; or if they were steadfastly and deliberately to contemplate what they do know. How sin is the sting of death, is best discovered when conscience is alarmed in a time of sickness; when the things of the world can no longer amuse, and death is approaching with hasty strides. These scenes are mostly kept secret; and very often they are not understood by those who are spectators of them. Perhaps the unhappy terrified sinner is considered as delirious, because the sting of death in his conscience extorts from him such confessions and complaints as he never made before. What was once slighted as a fable, is now seen and felt as a reality. Such cases, I am afraid, are more frequent than we are in general aware of. But they are suppressed, ascribed to the violence of the fever, and forgotten as soon as possible. Yet they do sometimes transpire. I believe there is no reason to doubt the truth of what we have heard, of one who, in the horrors of despair, vainly offered his physicians many thousand pounds, to prolong his life but a single day. The relation is in print, of another, who, pointing to the fire in his chamber, said, If he were only to lie twenty thousand years in such a fire, he should esteem it a mercy compared with what he felt, and with what he saw awaiting him. It is not always thus. Many persons die insensible as they lived, and can, perhaps, trifle and jest in their last moments. But the scripture assures us, that when they who die in their sins breathe their last in this world, they open their eyes in the other world in torments. For the sting of death, the desert of sin, unless timely removed by faith in Jesus, will fill the soul with anguish for ever. It derives a strength, an efficacy, and a continuance from the law.

This law, which gives strength to sin and sharpens the sting of death, is the law of our creation, as connected with the penalty which God has annexed to the breach of it. Our relation to God, as we are his creatures, requires us, according to the very nature of things, supremely to love, serve, trust, and obey him, who made us, and in whom we live, and breathe, and have our being, Acts xvii. 28. And our revolting from him, and living to ourselves in opposition to his will, is such an affront to his wisdom, power, authority, and goodness, as must necessarily involve misery in the very idea of it, if his perfections, the capacity of our souls, and our absolute dependence upon him, be attended to. And they must be attended to sooner or later. Though he keep long silence, and the sinner presumes upon his patience, and thinks him such a one as himself, he will at length reprove him, (Psalm l. 21,) and set his sins in order before him, in contrast with the demands of his law. The nature, authority, extent, and sanction of this law, all combine to give efficacy to the sting of death.

1. The law, to which our tempers and conduct ought to be conformed, is not an arbitrary appointment; but necessarily results from our state as creatures, and the capacities and powers we have received from our Creator. It is therefore holy, wise, and good; indispensable, and unchangeable. To love God with all our heart and strength, to depend upon him, to conform to every intimation of his will, was the duty of man from the first moment of his existence; was the law of his nature, written originally in his heart. The republication of it, as it stands in the Bible, by precepts and prohibitions, would not have been necessary had he continued in that state of rectitude in which he was created. It became necessary after his fall, to restrain him from evil, and to convince him of sin; but could not properly increase his primitive obligation to obedience.

2. We are bound to the observance of this law by the highest authority. It is the law of God our maker, preserver, and benefactor, who has every conceivable right to govern

us. His eye is always upon us, and we are surrounded by his power, so that we can neither avoid his notice nor escape his hand. Men are usually tenacious of their authority; they seldom allow their dependants to dispute or disobey their commands with impunity. It is expected that a son should honour his father, and a servant his master, Mal. i. 6. And when men have power to execute the dictates of their pride, they frequently punish disobedience with death. But how will these haughty worms, who trample upon their fellow-worms, and think they have a right to the most implicit obedience from their inferiors; how will they tremble when they shall appear before God, who is no respecter of persons, to answer for their contempt of the authority of the Sovereign Lawgiver, who, alone, is able to save or to destroy! That we ought to obey God rather than man, (Acts v. 29,) will, perhaps, be allowed as a speculative truth; but whoever will uniformly make it the rule of his practice, must expect upon many occasions to be deemed a fool or a madman by the world around him. But sovereignty, majesty, authority, and power belong to God. He is the Governor of the universe, and his throne is established in righteousness. He is long-suffering, and waits to be gracious, but he will not forego his right. Sin is the sting of death indeed, when the authority of him against whom it was committed is perceived by the conscience.

3. The extent of the law adds to the strength by which sin acts as the sting of death. Human laws can only take cognizance of words and actions. But the law of God reaches to the thoughts and inward recesses of the heart. It condemns what is most specious and most approved amongst men, if not proceeding from a right intention, and directed to the right end, which can be no other than the will and glory of him who made us. It condemns the sinner not only for the evil which he has actually committed, but for every sinful purpose formed in his heart, and which was only rendered abortive for want of opportunity, Matt. v. 28. It likewise takes exact notice of every aggravation of sin arising from circumstances, from the abuse of superior light and advantages, and from the long train of consequences, increasing in proportion to the influence which the rank, wealth, or extensive connexions of the offender give to his example.

4. The sanction of the law, which thus strengthens the malignity of sin, is the very point, if I may so express myself, of the sting of death. This is the displeasure of the Almighty. His holy, inflexible love of order will exclude those who violate it from his favour. They must be miserable, unless they are reconciled and renewed by the grace of the gospel. They must be separated from him, and they cannot be happy without him. They are not so even in this world, which they love. How miserable then must they be, when, torn from all their attachments, pleasures, and possessions, having no longer any thing to divert them from a fixed attention to their true state, they shall be made keenly sensible of what is implied in that sentence, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." We cannot now conceive what it will be to lose the only good which can satisfy a soul: to be shut out from God, whose favour is life, and in whose presence there is fulness of joy, and to be shut up where neither peace nor hope can enter. The images of fire unquenchable, and a never-dying worm, are but faint emblems of that despair and remorse which will sting the sinful soul in a future state. This is the second death: this is eternal death; for the wicked, and all they who forget God, when thrust into hell, will for ever desire to die, and death will for ever flee from them, Rev. ix. 6.

II. Let us turn our thoughts to a more pleasing theme, and attempt to take a view of death as softened into a privilege by him who has brought life and immortality to light. Jesus died. His death was penal; he died for sin, though not for his own, and therefore suffered the penalty due to sin, the curse of the broken law. The torment and shame of his crucifixion were preceded and accompanied by unknown agonies and conflicts, which caused him to sweat blood, and to utter strong cries and groans. Death stung him to the heart; but (as it is said of the enraged bee) he lost his sting. The law having been honoured, and sin expiated, by the obedience and sufferings of the Son of God for us, and in our nature, death has no longer power to sting those who believe in him. They do not properly die—they fall asleep in Jesus, Acts vii. 60; 1 Thessalonians iv. 15. To them this last enemy acts a friendly part. He is sent to put an end to all their sorrows, and to introduce them into a state of endless life and joy.

1. Dying believers can sing this song before their departure out of the world. We expect it, when we are called to attend them in their last hours; and if their illness leaves them in possession of their faculties and speech, we are seldom disappointed. Yet I believe a full knowledge of this subject cannot be collected from what we observe of others, or hear from them, when they are near death. We must be in similar circumstances ourselves, before we can see as they see, or possess the ideas which they endeavour to describe, and which seem too great for the language of mortals to convey.

We know, by the evidence of undeniable testimony, that many faithful servants of God, when called to suffer for his sake, have not

only been supported, but comforted, and enabled to rejoice, under the severest tortures, and even in the midst of the flames. We suppose, I think with reason, that such communications of light and power as raise a person, in such situations, above the ordinary feelings of humanity, must, either in kind or degree, be superior to what is usually enjoyed by christians in the smoother walks of prosperity and outward peace. God, who is all-sufficient, and always near, has promised to give his people strength according to their day, and in the time of trouble they are not disappointed. A measure of the like extraordinary discoveries and supports is often vouchsafed to dying believers, and thus the gloom which might otherwise hang over their dying hours, is dispelled; and while they contemplate the approach of death, a new world opens upon them. Even while they are yet upon earth, they stand upon the threshold of heaven. It seems, in many cases, as if the weakness of the bodily frame gave occasion to the awakening of some faculty, till then dormant in the soul, by which invisibles are not only believed, but seen, and unutterables are heard and understood.

> The soul's dark cottage, tattered and decayed,
> Lets in new light through chinks.——

Instances are frequent of those who are thus blessed when they die in the Lord; and it does not appear that old age, or great knowledge, or long experience, gives any considerable advantage in a dying hour; for when the heart is truly humbled for sin, and the hope solidly fixed upon the Saviour, persons of weak capacities and small attainments, yea, novices, and children, are enabled to meet death with equal fortitude and triumph. And often the present comforts they feel, and their lively expectations of approaching glory, inspire them with a dignity of sentiment and expression far beyond what could be expected from them; and perhaps their deportment upon the whole is no less animating and encouraging, than that of the most established and best informed believers. Thus, out of the mouths of babes and sucklings the Lord ordains strength, and perfects his praise, Psalm viii. 2. In a few hours, under the influence of his immediate teaching, they often learn more of the certainty and importance of divine things than can be derived from the ordinary methods of instruction in the course of many years. In the midst of agonies and outward distress, we hear them with admiration declare that they are truly happy, and that they never knew pleasure in their happiest days of health equal to what they enjoy when flesh and heart are fainting. For death has lost its sting as to them, and while they are able to speak, they continue ascribing praise to him, who has given them the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Every word in this doxology is emphatical.

1st. Thanks be to God.—This blessedness is all his work. The means are of his gracious appointment. The application is by his gracious power. He gave his Son for them, he sent his gospel to them. It was the agency of his Spirit that made them a willing people. The word of promise, which is the ground of their hope, was of his gratuitous providing, and it was he who constrained and enabled them to trust in it, Psalm cxix. 49.

2d. Who giveth us the victory.—This is victory indeed; for it is over the last enemy; and after the last enemy is vanquished, there can be no more conflicts. In this sense, believers are more than conquerors. In other wars, they who have conquered once and again, may have been finally defeated, or they may have died (like our long-lamented general Wolfe) upon the field of battle, and have left the fruits of their victory to be enjoyed by others. But the christian soldier, though he may occasionally be a loser in a skirmish, he is sure to conquer in the last great deciding battle; and when to an eye of sense, he seems to fall, he is instantly translated to receive the plaudit of his Commander, and the crown of life which he has prepared for them that love him.

3d. This victory is through our Lord Jesus Christ.—They gained it not by their own sword, neither was it their own arm that saved them, Psalm lxiv. 3. He died to deliver them, who would otherwise, through fear of death, have been always subject to bondage. And it is he who teaches their hands to war, and their fingers to fight, and covers their heads in the day of battle. Therefore they gladly say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name, be the glory and the praise," Psalm cxv. 1. And this consideration enhances their pleasure; for because they love him above all, they rejoice not only in the victory they obtain, but in the thought that they are indebted to him for it. For were it possible there could be several methods of salvation, and they were left to their own choice, they would, most gladly and deliberately, choose that method which should bring them under the greatest obligations to him.

2. This triumphant song will be sung to the highest advantage, when the whole body of the redeemed shall be collected together to sing it with one heart and voice at the great resurrection-day. Lot was undoubtedly thankful, when he was snatched from the impending destruction of Sodom. Yet his lingering, (Gen. xix. 16,) showed, that he had but an imperfect sense of the greatness of the mercy afforded him. His feelings were probably stronger afterwards, when he stood in safety upon the mountain, and actually saw the smoke rising, like the smoke of a

furnace, from the place where he had lately dwelt. At present we have but very faint ideas of the misery from which we are delivered, of the happiness reserved in heaven for us; or of the sufferings of the Redeemer; but if we attain to the heavenly Zion, and see from thence the smoke of that bottomless pit, which might justly have been our everlasting abode, we shall then more fully understand what we are delivered from, the means of our deliverance, and the riches of the inheritance of the saints in light. And then we shall sing in more exalted strains than we can at present even conceive of, "Thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

SERMON XLV.

DIVINE SUPPORT AND PROTECTION.

(*What shall we say then to these things?*) *If God be for us, who can be against us?* Rom. viii. 31.

THE passions of joy or grief, of admiration or gratitude, are moderate, when we are able to find words which fully describe their emotions. When they rise very high, language is too faint to express them; and the person is either lost in silence, or feels something which, after his most laboured efforts, is too big for utterance. We may often observe the apostle Paul under this difficulty, when attempting to excite in others such sensations as filled his own heart, while contemplating the glories and blessings of the gospel. Little verbal critics, who are not animated by his fervour, are incapable of entering into the spirit of his writings. They coldly examine them by the strictness of grammatical rules, and think themselves warranted to charge him with solecisms, and improprieties of speech. For it must be allowed, that he sometimes departs from the usual forms of expression; invents new words, or at least compounds words for his own use, and heaps one hyperbole upon another. But there is a beautiful energy in his manner far superior to the frigid exactness of grammarians, though the taste of a mere grammarian is unable to admire or relish it. When he is stating the advantage of being with Christ, as beyond any thing that can be enjoyed in the present life, he is not content with saying, as his expression is rendered in our version, "It is far better," Phil. i. 23. In the Greek another word of comparison is added, which, if our language would bear the literal translation, would be, "Far more better," or "Much more better." And when he would describe the low opinion he had of himself, great as his attainments were in our view, he thinks it not sufficient to style himself, "The least of all saints," but "less than the least," Eph. iii. 8. Such phrases do not imply that he was ignorant of the rules of good writing, but they strongly intimate the fulness of his heart. In the course of the chapter before us, having taken a rapid survey of the work of grace, carried on by successive steps in the hearts of believers, till at length consummated in glory, in this verse, instead of studying for words answerable to his views, he seems to come to a full stop, as sensible that the strongest expressions he could use would be too faint. He makes an abrupt transition from describing to admiring. He has said much, but not enough; and therefore sums up all with, "What shall we say to these things?" Surely they who can read, with the utmost coolness and indifference, what he could not write without rapture and astonishment, do not take his words in his sense. If the apostle's phraseology is now become obsolete, and sounds uncouth in the ears of too many who would be thought christians, is there not too much reason to fear that they are christians only in name?

Though this short lively question is omitted in the musical composition, I am not willing to leave it out. It stands well, as a sequel to what we have lately considered. The sting of death is taken away. Death itself is swallowed up in victory. Sinners, who were once burdened with guilt, and exposed to condemnation, obtain a right to sing, "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ"—"What shall we say to these things?"

It stands well likewise, as introducing the following question,—"If God be for us;" if his promises, his power, his wisdom, and his love, be all engaged on our behalf, "who can be against us?" What shall we, or can we, or need we say more than this! what cause can we have for fear, or our enemies for triumph, if God be for us?

We may consider,

I. What is implied in the supposition.

II. The meaning of the inference.

I. The form of the question is hypothetical. If the assumption be right, that God is for us; the conclusion, that none can be effectually against us, is infallibly sure. Many serious persons will allow, that if God be indeed for them, all must, and will be well in the end. But they hesitate at the *if*, and are ready to ask, How shall I know that God is for me? I would offer you a few considerations towards the determining of this point, in the first place.

Sin has made an awful breach and separation between God and mankind. They are alienated in their minds from him, and he is justly displeased with them. The intercourse and communion with God, which constitute the honour and happiness of the human na-

ture, were no longer either afforded or desired when man rebelled against his Maker, except to the few who understood and embraced his gracious purpose of reconciliation, the first intimation of which was revealed in the promise of the seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent's head, Gen. iii. 15. The clear and full discovery of this reconciliation is made known to us by the gospel. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself," 2 Cor. v. 19. God is already reconciled in this sense, that having provided and accepted a satisfaction to his law and justice, he can now, in a way worthy of himself, receive and pardon the returning sinner. And he accompanies the word of his grace with the power of his Holy Spirit, to make sinners willing to be reconciled to him. If we be for God, he is assuredly for us. If we seek him, he has been beforehand with us: for, in the first instance, he is always found of those who seek him not, Is. lxv. 1. If we love him, it is because he first loved us. True believers walk with God. But two cannot walk together, with confidence and comfort, unless they be agreed, Amos iii. 3. This agreement is chiefly with respect to three particulars proposed by the Lord God in his word, and to which the believing sinner cheerfully and thankfully accedes.

1. In the ground of the agreement; this is Messiah, the Mediator between God and man. When he entered upon his office, a voice from heaven commended him to sinners. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," Matt. iii. 17. And they who are enlightened to behold the glory of God in his person and engagement, accept him as the beloved Saviour in whom and with whom they are well pleased. Without this acceptance of the Mediator there can be no agreement. Jesus is the only door, the only way of a sinner's access to the knowledge and favour of God. This is the precious and sure foundation which he has laid in Zion, (1 Pet. ii. 6;) and to presume to build our hope upon any other, is to build upon a quicksand. In this point reason, in its present distempered state, would lead us, if followed, directly contrary to the simplicity of faith. Reason suggests, that if we have acted wrong, we must repent and amend; and what can we do more? But the law against which we have sinned makes no provision for repentance. Nor is such a repentance as includes a change of heart, (and nothing short of this deserves the name,) in our own power. Repentance unto life, (Acts xi. 18,) is the gift of God; and Jesus, who is exalted to be a prince and a Saviour, (Acts v. 31,) bestows it upon those who acknowledge him, and implore it of him. But God will only treat with us as those who are condemned already, who have nothing but sin, and deserve nothing but misery. When we feel this to be our proper state, we are referred to Jesus, in whom God is well pleased, and for whose sake sins are pardoned, and sinners accepted and justified, without condition and without exception. And then likewise we begin to see the necessity, propriety, and sufficiency of this appointment. Herein all who are taught of God are of one mind. However they may differ in some respects, they agree in cordially receiving Christ Jesus the Lord, (Col. ii. 6,) as he is made of God for us wisdom, righteousness, and salvation.

2. They agree with God in the great design of the gospel, which is to purify unto himself a peculiar people, who, being delivered from their fears and their enemies, shall serve him with an unreserved and persevering obedience, Luke i. 74, 75. A deliverance from the power of sin and Satan, a devotedness to God, and a conformity to the mind and pattern of his dear Son, are included by every true believer in the idea of salvation. He knows that he can be happy in no other way. This is a turning point. There are convictions of sin excited by a dread of punishment, which, though distressing to the conscience, leave the heart and affections unchanged. They who are thus impressed, if no farther, would be satisfied with an assurance of pardon. But the grace of God which bringeth salvation, (Tit. ii. 11, 12,) teaches us to renounce, to abhor all ungodliness in the present world; to give ourselves unto him who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity; and to walk worthy of God, who calls us to his kingdom and glory, 1 Thess. ii. 12. This is the will of God, even our sanctification. And this is the desire of his people, that they may be sanctified wholly; that their whole persons spirit, soul, and body, may be preserved blameless; that they may be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ; that they may walk as the sons of God without rebuke, and shine as lights in the world, Phil. ii. 15. Though their attainments are imperfect, in their judgment and desires, they are fully agreed with God as to their aim and design.

3. They are agreed with him likewise as to the ultimate great end, the final cause of their redemption, which is the praise of the glory of his grace, Eph. i. 6. That the loftiness, high looks, and proud pretences of men may be abased, and the Lord alone may be exalted, and that he who glorieth may glory only in the Lord, 1 Corinthians, i. 31. Salvation is of the Lord in every sense; the plan, the price, the power, the application, the consummation. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the author and the object of it. The praise therefore is wholly due to him, and he claims it. To this claim his people fully consent. It is the desire of their souls, that his name, which alone is excellent, may alone

be extolled; and with one heart and voice they say, Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thee be all the glory and all the praise, Psalm cxv. 1.

If we truly understand and approve these things, then we are certainly engaged for God, and of course he is for us. For he alone could either enable us to see them in their true light, or incline our hearts to embrace them. Who then can be against us!

II. We are not to understand the question, "Who can be against us?" as designed to encourage us to expect that they who have the Lord on their side will meet with no opposition, but that all opposition against them will be in vain.

1. They whom God is for, will on that very account have many opposers.

(1.) The men of the world.—This our Lord expressly teaches us to expect. "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own. But because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you," John xv. 19. And his apostle, "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you," 1 John iii. 14. Till we declare for him, the world will bear with us, but no longer, as the Gibeonites were in a state of honour and friendship with the neighbouring cities till they submitted to Joshua; (Josh. x. 1—4;) but when they obtained peace from him, they were immediately involved in war with their former friends. While Saul persecuted the church, the world smiled upon him, and he seemed to be, as we say, in the way of preferment. But when he yielded himself to the service of Christ, and his defection from the common cause became generally known, bonds and afflictions awaited him in every place; and they who before had employed and caressed him sought his life. I do not mean to sound a trumpet of defiance. I believe that young converts, by their warm but injudicious zeal, often, more than is necessary, provoke the spirit of the world, and thereby increase their own difficulties. The gospel, when rightly understood, inspires a spirit of benevolence, and directs to a conduct which is suited to conciliate good-will and esteem. And when the apostle exhorts us, If it be possible, and as much as in us lies, to live peaceably with all men, (Rom. xii. 18,) he gives us hope that much may be done to soften prejudices, to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, and to make them at least ashamed, by a patient perseverance in well doing. A consistent christian, whose integrity, humility, and philanthropy mark his character and adorn his profession, will in time command respect; but his attachment to unfashionable truths, and of his separation from the maxims and pursuits of the many, will render him, in their eyes, singular and precise, weak and enthusiastic. If they say, "He is a good sort of man, but has some strange peculiarities," it is the most favourable judgment he can hope for; and from some persons, and at some times, he will meet with tokens of a settled dislike. For though a religious character may be formed, which even the world will approve, yet all who will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution, 2 Tim. iii. 12. They walk in the midst of observers, who watch for their halting, who lay snares for their feet, and will endeavour to bribe or intimidate them to forsake the path of duty. It is difficult to stem the torrent, or to avoid the infection of the world, and to live superior to the fear of man, as becomes us, if we know whose we are, and whom we serve. But though difficult, it is practicable and attainable, and actually attained by believers; for this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith, 1 John v. 4.

(2.) The powers of darkness.—Satan will not ordinarily trouble while he bears rule. He is indeed an enemy to his own servants, and seeks their destruction, both soul and body, by pushing them on in sin, which if persisted in will prove their ruin; but while they make no resistance, he gives them no disturbance. It is otherwise with those whom the Lord has freed from his bondage. He will pursue them like a lion seeking his prey, (1 Pet. v. 8,) and lie in wait for them like a serpent in the path. This is one cause of the world's hatred; for the scripture styles him the god of this world, (2 Cor. iv. 4,) and he sets all that he can influence, tongues, and pens, and swords, against those who are on the Lord's side. Therefore the people of God may be known by two marks. Satan by himself and by his instruments fights against them, and they also fight against him. The former without the latter is not conclusive. A mere outward profession of religion may excite opposition, and mere pretenders may take pleasure in it for a time, if it does not come too close. It may feed their vanity, and give them a sort of consequence, by having sufferings to talk of. But I would entreat my hearers seriously to examine, Is your heart really against sin, which is the strength of Satan's kingdom! Are you against his will and interest in the world! Have you renounced his service! If so, fear not. God is for you, and none can harm you. For,

2. No opposition can prevail against us, if God be for us. It is impossible to deny, or even to doubt this truth, upon the principles of reason; for who, or what, can injure those who are under the protection of Omnipotence? And yet it is not always easy to maintain the persuasion of it in the mind, and to abide in the exercise of faith, when to an eye of sense, all things seem against us. But though we believe not, he continueth faithful, and will not forsake those whom he once enables to put their trust in him. Job was a

faithful and approved servant of God, yet for a season his trials were great, and his confidence was sometimes shaken. But he was supported, and at length delivered. There are many instances recorded in scripture to confirm our faith, and to teach us, that God manifests himself to be for his people, and in different ways renders them superior to all their difficulties and enemies.

At one time he prevents the threatened danger. They only see it or expect it, for he is better to them than their apprehensions and fears. Thus, when Sennacherib was furious against Jerusalem, and supposed he could easily prevail, he was not suffered to come near it, Isa. xxxvii. 29, 33. When he thought to destroy it, he felt a hook and a bridle which he could not resist, and was compelled to retire disappointed and ashamed.

At another time the enemies go a step farther. His people are brought into trouble, but God is with them, and they escape unhurt. So Daniel, though he was cast into the den of lions, (Dan. vi. 23,) received no more harm from them than if he had been among a flock of sheep. He permitted three of his servants to be thrown into a furnace of fire, but he restrained the violence of the flames, so that not even a hair of their heads was singed, Dan. iii. 27.

The most that opposers can do is to kill the body, Luke xii. 4. If God permits his people to be thus treated, still they are not forsaken. Their death is precious in his sight, Psalm cxvi. 15. They who die in the Lord are blessed. They are highly honoured who are called and enabled to die for him. If he is pleased to comfort them with his presence, and then to take them home to himself, they can desire no more. Stephen, though apparently given up to the power of his adversaries, and cruelly stoned to death, was no less happy than those who die in composure upon their beds, with their friends around them. Nor was he less composed; for the heavens were opened to him, and he saw his Saviour in glory, approving his fidelity, and ready to receive his spirit, Acts vii. 56—60

In brief, whatever men or devils may attempt against us, there are three things which, if we are true believers, they cannot do. They may be helpful to wean us from the world; they may add earnestness to our prayers; they may press us to greater watchfulness and dependence; they may afford fair occasions of evidencing our sincerity, the goodness of our cause, and the power of that God who is for us.—Such are the benefits that the Lord teaches his people to derive from their sufferings, for he will not let them suffer or be oppressed in vain. But no enemy can deprive us of the love with which God favours us, or the grace which he has given us, or the glory which he has prepared for us. Now what shall we say to these things Alas! there are too many who say, at least in their hearts (for their conduct bewrays their secret thoughts,) we care but little about them. If they were to speak out, they might adopt the language of the rebellious Jews to the prophet, "As to the words which thou hast spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee. But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth," Jer. xliv. 16, 17. And there are others who plainly say, Let us then continue in sin that grace may abound. They do not so expressly reject the gospel as to take encouragement from it to go on in their wickedness. The case of the former is very dangerous, that of the latter is still worse. But grace, though long slighted, though often abused, is once more proclaimed in your hearing. The Lord forbid that you should perish with the sound of salvation in your ears.

At present, and while you persist in your impenitence and unbelief, I may reverse the words of my text. O consider, I beseech you, before it be too late, if God be against you, who can be for you? Will your companions comfort you in a dying hour? Will your riches profit you in the day of wrath? Will the recollection of your sinful pleasures give you confidence to stand before this great and glorious Lord God, when you shall be summoned to appear at his tribunal? May you be timely wise, and flee for refuge to the hope set before you!

SERMON XLVI.

ACCUSERS CHALLENGED.

Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Rom. viii. 33.

THOUGH the collating of manuscripts and various readings, has undoubtedly been of use in rectifying some mistakes which, through the inadvertency of transcribers, had crept into different copies of the New Testament; yet such supposed corrections of the text ought to be admitted with caution, and not unless supported by strong reasons and good authorities. The whole scripture is given by inspiration of God; and they who thankfully receive it as his book, will not trifle with it by substituting bold conjectural alterations, which, though they may deem to be amendments, may possibly disguise or alter the genuine sense of the passage. Some fancied emendations might be pointed out, suggested by very learned men, which do not seem to afford so strong a proof of the sound judgment of the proposers, as of their vanity and rashness. Let the learned be as

ingenious as they please in correcting and amending the text of Horace or Virgil, for it is of little importance to us whether their criticisms be well founded or not, but let them treat the pages of divine revelation with reverence.

But the pointing of the New Testament, though it has a considerable influence upon the sense, is of inferior authority. It is a human invention, very helpful, and for the most part, I suppose, well executed. But in some places it may admit of real amendment. The most ancient manuscripts are without points, and some of them are even without a distinction of the words. With the pointing, therefore, we may take more liberty than with the text; though even this liberty should be used soberly. A change in the pointing of this verse and the following, will not alter the received sense, but, as some critics judge, will make it more striking and emphatical. If two clauses should be read with an interrogation instead of a period, the apostle's triumphant challenge may be expressed in the following brief paraphrase.

Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? Shall God himself? So far from it, it is he *who justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? Shall Christ?* Nay, he loves them, and accepts them. *Shall he who died for them, yea, rather who is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God*, on their behalf, *who also maketh intercession for them?* There is not the least ground to fear, that he who has promised to justify them will lay any thing to their charge; or that he will condemn them, who died to deliver them from condemnation, nor can any charge of their enemies prevail to the condemnation of those whom God is pleased to justify, and for whom Christ died, and now intercedes before the throne.

The death, the resurrection, and ascension of Messiah, we have already considered. I shall speak only to two points from this verse

I. The title here given to believers.—God's elect.

II. Their great privilege, they are justified.—It is God who justifieth them.

I. The persons who will be finally justified by God are here styled his elect. Very near and strong is the connexion between peace and truth. Yet a mistaken zeal for truth has produced many controversies, which have hurt the peace of the people of God among themselves; and at the same time have exposed them to the scorn and derision of the world. On the other hand, a pretended or improper regard for peace has often been prejudicial to the truth. But that peace which is procured at the expense of truth, is too dearly purchased. Every branch of doctrine, belonging to the faith once delivered to the saints, is not equally plain to every believer. Some of these doctrines the apostle compares to milk, the proper and necessary food for babes, (Heb. v. 13, 14;) others to strong meat, adapted to a more advanced state in the spiritual life, when experience is more enlarged, and the judgment more established. The Lord, the great teacher, leads his children on gradually, from the plainer to the more difficult truths, as they are able to bear them. But human teachers are often too hasty: they do not attend sufficiently to the weakness of young converts, but expect them to learn and receive every thing at once; they are not even content with offering strong meat prematurely to babes, but force upon them the bones of subtilties, distinctions, and disputations. But though a judicious minister will endeavour to accommodate himself to the state of his hearers, no gospel-truth is to be tamely and voluntarily suppressed from a fear of displeasing men. In fact, however, the controversies which have obtained among real christians, have not so much affected the truth as it lies in scripture, as the different explanations, which fallible men of warm passions, and too full of their own sense, have given of it. They who professedly hold and avow the doctrine of an election of grace, are now called *Calvinists;* and the name is used by some persons as a term of reproach. They would insinuate that Calvin invented the doctrine; or at least, that he borrowed it from Austin, who according to them, was the first of the Fathers that held it. It is enough for me that I find it in the New Testament. But many things advanced upon the subject by later writers, I confess, I do not find there. If any persons advance harsh assertions not warranted by the word of God, I am not bound to defend them. But as the doctrine itself is plainly taught, both by our Lord and his apostles, and is of great importance, when rightly understood, to promote the humiliation, gratitude, and comfort of believers, I think it my duty to state it as plainly as I can. I shall offer my view of it, in a series of propositions so evidently founded (as I conceive) on acknowledged principles of scripture, that they cannot be easily controverted by any persons who have a real reverence for the word of God, and any due acquaintance with their own hearts.

1. All mankind are sinners, (Rom. iii. 23,) by nature and practice. Their lives are stained with transgressions, their hearts are depraved, their minds blinded, and alienated from God. So that they are not sensible either of their guilt or their misery; nor so much as desirous of returning to God, till he prevents them with his mercy, and begins to draw their hearts towards himself. Were I to prove this at large, I might transcribe one half of the Bible. Nay, it is fully proved by experience and observation. The Heathens felt and confessed it. My present subject

does not require me to account for it, or to reason upon it. That it is so, I appeal to fact.

2. The inestimable gift of a Saviour, to atone for sin and to mediate between God and man, (John iii. 16;) that there might be a way opened for the communication of mercy to sinners, without prejudice to the honour of the perfections and government of God—this gift was the effect of his own rich grace and love, (Rom. v. 6, 8,) no less unthought of, and undesired, than undeserved by fallen man.

3. Wherever this love of God to man is made known by the gospel, there is encouragement, and a command given to all men everywhere to repent, Acts xvii. 30, 31. The manifestation of the eternal Word in the human nature, and his death upon the cross, are spoken of as the highest display of the wisdom and goodness of God. Designed to give us, in one and the same transaction, the most affecting sense of the evil of sin, and the strongest assurance imaginable, that there is forgiveness with God, Rom. iii. 24, 25.

4. Men, while blinded by pride and prejudice, enslaved to sinful passions, and under the influence of this present evil world, neither can nor will receive the truth in the love of it, 2 Cor. iv. 4; John v. 40; vi. 44. They are prepossessed and pre-engaged. This, at least, is evidently the case with many people in this favoured nation, who, when the gospel is proposed to them in the most unexceptionable manner, not only disregard, but treat it with a pointed contempt and indignation, Luke iv. 28, 29; Acts xvii. 18. Such was its reception at the beginning, and we are not to wonder, therefore, that it is so at this day.

5. As all mankind spring from one stock, there are not two different sorts of men by nature; consequently they who receive the gospel are no better in themselves, (Eph. ii. 3,) than they are who reject it. The apostle writing to the believers at Corinth, having enumerated a catalogue, in which he comprises some of the most flagitious and infamous characters, (1 Cor. vi. 9—11,) and allowed to be so by the common consent of mankind, adds, "such were some of you." Surely it cannot be said, that they who had degraded themselves below the brutes, by their abominable practices, were better disposed than others to receive that gospel, which is not more distinguished by the sublimity of its doctrine, than by the purity and holiness of conversation which it enjoins!

6. It seems, therefore, at least highly probable, that all men universally, if left to themselves, would act as the majority do to whom the word of salvation is sent; that is, they would reject and despise it. And it is undeniable, that some, who in the day of God's power have cordially received the gospel, did for a season oppose it with no less pertinacity than any of those who have continued to hate and resist it to the end of life. Saul of Tarsus was an eminent instance, Acts ix. 1. He did not merely slight the doctrine of a crucified Saviour; but, according to his mistaken views, thought himself bound in conscience to suppress those who embraced it. He breathed out threatening, and slaughter, and, as he expresses it himself, was exceedingly mad against them, (Acts xxvi. 11,) and made havoc of them. His mind was filled with this bitter and insatiable rage, at the moment when the Lord Jesus appeared to him in his way to Damascus. Is it possible that a man thus disposed should suddenly become a preacher of the faith which he had long laboured to destroy, if his heart and views had not been changed by a supernatural agency? Or that the like prejudices in other persons can be removed in any other manner!

7. If all men had heard the gospel in vain, then Christ would have died in vain. But this is prevented by the covenanted office and influence of the Holy Spirit, (John xvi. 8,) who accompanies the word with his energy, and makes it the power of God to the salvation of those who believe. He prepares the minds of sinners, and, as in the case of Lydia, (Acts xvi. 14,) opens their hearts to understand and receive the truth, in the love of it.

8. But who will presume to say, that when God was pleased to make a proposal of mercy to a race of rebels, he was likewise bound to overcome the obstinacy of men in every case, and to compel them to accept it by an act of his invincible power. If he does thus interpose in favour of some, it is an act of free mercy to which they have no claim. For if we had a claim, the benefit would be an act of justice, rather than of mercy. May not the great Sovereign of the world do what he will with his own! Matt. xx. 15. And nothing is more peculiarly and eminently his own than his mercy. Yes, we are assured, that he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy; (Rom. ix. 18;) and whom he will, he may justly leave to be hardened in their impenitence and unbelief. We have all deserved to be so left; but he, as the potter over the clay, has power and right to make a difference, as it seemeth good in his sight. And who will say unto him, What doest thou? Job ix. 12.

9. When sinners are effectually called by the gospel, then they are visibly chosen out of the world, (John xv. 19,) in the spirit and tempers of which they before lived, disobedient and deceived, even as others. Old things pass away, and all things become new, 2 Cor. v. 17. Their hopes and fears, their companions and pleasures, their pursuits and aims, are all changed. The change in these respects is so evident, that they are soon no-

ticed and marked, pitied or derided, by those from whom they are now separated. And I think they who really experience this change will willingly ascribe it to the grace of God.

10. But if they are thus chosen in time, it follows of course that they were chosen from everlasting. Both these expressions, when applied to this subject, amount to the same thing; and the seeming difference between them is chiefly owing to our weakness and ignorance. To the infinite and eternal God our little distinctions of past, present, and future, are nothing. We think unworthily of the unchangeable Jehovah, and liken him too much to ourselves, if we suppose that he can form a new purpose. If it be his pleasure to convert a sinner to-day, he had the same gracious design in favour of that sinner yesterday, at the day of his birth, a thousand years before he was born, and a thousand ages (to speak according to our poor conceptions) before the world began. For that mode of duration which we call time, has no respect to him who inhabiteth eternity, Is. lvii. 15.

With regard to those who reject the declaration of the mercy of God, who though called and invited by the gospel, and often touched by the power of his Holy Spirit, will not come to the Saviour for life, but persist in their determination to go on in their sins, their ruin is not only unavoidable, but just in the highest degree. And though, like the wicked servant in the parable, (Matt. xxv. 24,) they cavil against the Lord, their mouths will be stopped, (Rom. iii. 19,) when he shall at length appear to plead with them face to face. Then their cobweb excuses will fail them, and the proper ground of their condemnation will be, that when he sent them light, they turned from it, and chose darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil, John iii. 19.

II. The great privilege of the elect, comprehensive of every blessing is, that they are justified, finally and authoritatively justified from all that can possibly be laid to their charge; for it is God himself who justifieth them.

The justification of a sinner before God, by faith in the obedience and atonement of Christ, is considered by many persons, in these days of refinement, in no better light than as a branch of scholastic theology, which is now exploded as uncouth and obsolete. At the Reformation, it was the turning point between the Protestants and Papists. Luther deemed it the criterion of a flourishing or a falling church; that is, he judged the church would always be in a thriving or a declining state, in proportion as the importance of this doctrine was attended to. How important it appeared to our English reformers, many of whom sealed their testimony to it with their blood, may be known by the writings of Cranmer, Latimer, Philpot, and others: and by the articles of the Church of England, which are still of so much authority by law, that no person can be admitted into Holy Orders amongst us, till he has declared and subscribed his assent to them. But I hope never to preach a doctrine to my hearers which needs the names and authority of men, however respectable, for its support. Search the scriptures, (John v. 39,) and judge by them of the importance of this doctrine. Judge of it by the text now before us. The apostle speaks of it as sufficient to silence every charge, to free from all condemnation, and inseparably connected with eternal life; for those whom God justifies he will also glorify, Rom. viii. 30. Though volumes have been written upon the subject, I think it may be explained in few words. Every one must give an account of himself to God; and the judgment will proceed according to the tenor of his holy word. By the law no flesh can be justified, for all have sinned: (Rom. iii. 19, 20:) but they who believe the gospel will be justified from all things, (Acts xiii. 39,) for which the law would otherwise condemn them; and as they who believe not are condemned already, (John iii. 18,) so believers are already justified by faith, and have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, (Rom. v. 1,) in the present life. They plead guilty to the charge of the law; but they can likewise plead, that they renounce all hope and righteousness in themselves, and upon the warrant of the word of promise, put their whole trust in Jesus, as the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth: (Rom. x. 4:) and this plea is accepted. "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness," (Rom. iv. 5,) and his sins are no more remembered against him, Heb. viii. 12.

This justification, in its own nature, is authoritative, complete, and final. It is an act of God's mercy, which, because founded upon the mediation of Jesus, may, with no less truth be styled an act of his justice, whereby the believing sinner is delivered from the curse of the law, from the guilt and power of sin, and is translated into the kingdom of his dear Son, Col. i. 13. It includes the pardon of all sin, and admission to the state of a child of God. It is a passing from death unto life, John v. 24. By faith of the operation of God, the sinner, once afar off, is brought nigh, is accepted in the Beloved, and becomes one with him, as the branch is united to the vine, and the members with the head, John xv. 15. The sanctification of a believer is imperfect and gradual; but his justification, in this sense, from the moment when he begins to live a life of faith in the Son of God, is perfect, and incapable of increase. The principle of life in a new-born infant, and the privileges dependent upon his

birth, (if he be the heir of a great family,) are the same from the first hour, as at any future time. He is stronger as he grows up to the stature of a man, but is not more alive; he grows up likewise more into the knowledge and enjoyment of his privileges, but his right to them admits of no augmentation; for he derives it, not from his years, or his stature, or his powers, but from the relation in which he stands as a child to his father. Thus it is with those who are born from above; they are immediately the children and heirs of God, though for a time, like minors while under age, they may seem to differ but little from servants; (Gal. iv. 1, 2;) and it doth not yet appear what they shall be.

But though justification in the sight of God be connected with the reality of faith, the comfortable perception of it in our own consciences is proportionable to the degree of faith. In young converts, therefore, it is usually weak. They are well satisfied that Jesus is the only Saviour, and they have no doubt of his ability and sufficiency in that character, in favour of those who put their trust in him; but they are suspicious and jealous of themselves; they are apprehensive of something singular in their own case, which may justly exclude them from his mercy, or they fear that they do not believe aright. But the weakest believer is a child of God; and true faith, though at first like a grain of mustard-seed, is interested in all the promises of the gospel. If it be true, it will grow, (Mark iv. 26,) it will attain to a more simple dependence upon its great object, and will work its way, through a thousand doubts and fears, (which, for a season, are not without their use,) till at length the weak christian becomes strong in faith, strong in the Lord, and is enabled to say, "I know whom I have believed," 2 Tim. i. 12. Who shall lay any thing to my charge? Who shall condemn? It is God who justifieth. It is Christ who died for me and rose again.

But especially at the great day, the Lord the Judge shall ratify their justification publicly before assembled worlds. Then every tongue that riseth in judgment against them (Is. liv. 17,) shall be put to silence. Then Satan will be utterly confounded, and many who despised them on earth will be astonished and say—"These are they whose lives we accounted madness, and their end to be without honour. How are they numbered among the children of God!" Wisdom, v. 4, 5.

The right knowledge of this doctrine is a source of abiding joy; it likewise animates love, zeal, gratitude, and all the noblest powers of the soul, and produces a habit of cheerful and successful obedience to the whole will of God. But it may be, and too often is, misunderstood and abused. If you receive it by divine teaching, it will fill you with those fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God, Phil. i. 11. But if you learn it only from men and books, if you are content with the notion of it in your head, instead of the powerful experience of it in your heart, it will have a contrary effect. Such a lifeless form, even of the truth itself, will probably make you heady and high minded, censorious of others, trifling in your spirit, and unsettled in your conduct. Oh! be afraid of resembling the foolish virgins, (Matt. xxv. 1—12,) of having the lamp of your profession expire in darkness for want of the oil of grace; lest when the bridegroom cometh, you should find the door shut against you.

SERMON XLVII.

THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST.

Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. ROMANS, viii. 34.

THE redemption of the soul is precious. Fools make a mock of sin, Prov. xvi. 9. But they will not think lightly of it who duly consider the majesty, authority, and goodness of him against whom it is committed: and who are taught by what God actually has done, what sin rendered necessary to be done, before a sinner could have a well-grounded hope of forgiveness. For wisdom does nothing in vain. The death of the Son of God would have been in vain, (Gal. ii. 21,) if the great design in favour of sinful men could have been effected by inferior means. But as he, in the office of Mediator, was the hope of mankind from the beginning; so the great work he has accomplished, and the characters he sustains, when made known to the conscience, are in fact, sufficient to relieve in every case, to answer every charge, and to satisfy the believer in Jesus that there is now no condemnation to fear. There are many (as we have observed) ready to accuse, but it is in vain; the charge may be true, but it is overruled. Who shall dare to condemn, if things be as the apostle states them in this passage? Whoever would impeach the hope of a true believer, must prove, (if he can,) that Christ did not die; or that he did not rise from the dead; or that he was not admitted into the presence of God on our behalf; or that he is unmindful of his promise, to make intercession for all who come unto God by him. For if these points are indubitable and sure, it is impossible that the soul which has trusted in Jesus, and put its cause into his hands, can miscarry.

The death and resurrection of our Lord, his appearance in our nature, clothed with

glory, seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high, as the High-Priest of our profession, can scarcely be considered too often. These old truths are always new to those who love him, and are the food by which their souls live. Yet I shall not at present repeat what I have offered upon them from former passages, but shall chiefly confine myself to the subject of his intercession, which has not, until now, expressly occurred to our meditations.

The word the apostle uses here, and in Heb. vii. 25,—"Seeing he ever liveth to make intercession," occurs likewise in Acts xxv. 24, where Festus speaks of the process managed by the Jews against Paul; and also in Rom. xi. 2, of Elijah's making intercession to God against Israel. From these passages compared together, we may observe that the word is to be taken in a large sense. He pleads our cause, he manages our concerns, he answers our enemies. Who then shall condemn those for whom the Lord Jesus thus employs his power and his love? He is our advocate, (1 John ii. 1,) he takes upon him our whole concern. He pleads as a Priest, and manages as a King, for those who come unto God by him.

I. He pleads as a Priest.—His office of intercession has a plain reference to his great instituted type, the high priest under the Levitical dispensation; who, according to the appointment of God, entered within the vail, to present the blood of the sacrifice before the mercy-seat, Lev. xvi. We have a clear and infallible explanation of the design of this institution. "Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people. The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing. Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation. But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us," Heb. ix. 6—12. Thus Jesus is passed into the heavens, entered into the holy of holies with his own blood. His presence there, in our nature, with the marks of his sufferings for us, as the Lamb that has been slain, is an unceasing virtual intercession on our behalf. I meddle not with curious questions on this subject, as to the manner in which his intercession is carried on: it is sufficient to know that he is there, and there for us, as our representative. This consideration is of continual use, to animate and encourage sinners in their approach to God. There are three cases particularly, in which the heart that knows its own bitterness must sink, were it not for the relieving thought, that there is an advocate with the Father, a High Priest, who, by his intercession, is able to save to the uttermost.

1. When the mind is burdened with guilt. Great is the distress of an awakened conscience. The sinner now is sensible of wants which God alone can supply, and of miseries from which he cannot be extricated but by an almighty arm. But when he thinks of the majesty and holiness of God, he is troubled and adopts the language of the prophet, "Wo is me, I am undone!" Isa. vi. 5. He dares not draw near to God, nor does he dare to keep any longer at a distance from him. But when such a one is enabled to look to Jesus as the intercessor, what light and comfort does he receive? For the gospel speaks inviting language. Let not the weary and heavy-laden sinner fear to approach. Your peace is already made in the court above, and your advocate is waiting to introduce you. Lift up your heart to him and think you hear him in effect saying, "Father, there is another sinner who has heard of my name, and desires to trust in me. Father, I will, that he also may be delivered from going down into the pit, and interested in the ransom which I have provided."

2. When we are deeply conscious of our defects in duty. If we compare our best performances with the demands of the law, the majesty of God, and the unspeakable obligations we are under; if we consider our innumerable sins of omission, and that the little we can do is polluted and defiled by the mixture of evil thoughts, and the working of selfish principles, aims, and motives, which though we disapprove, we are unable to suppress, we have great reason to confess, "To us belong shame and confusion of face," Dan. ix. 7. But we are relieved by the thought, that Jesus the High Priest bears the iniquity of our holy things, perfumes our prayers with the incense of his mediation, and washes our tears in his own blood. This inspires a confidence, that though we are unworthy of the least of his mercies, we may humbly hope for a share in the greatest blessings he bestows, because we are heard and accepted, not on the account of our own prayers and services, but in the beloved Son of God, who maketh intercession for us. Thus the wisdom and love of God have provided a wonderful expedient, which, so far as it is rightly understood, and cordially embraced, while it

lays the sinner low as the dust in point of humiliation and self-abasement, fills him at the same time with a hope full of glory, which, with respect to its foundation, cannot be shaken; and with respect to its object, can be satisfied with nothing less than all the fulness of God. There are favoured seasons in which the believer, having a lively impression of the authority and love of the Intercessor, can address the great Jehovah as his Father, with no less confidence than if he was holy and spotless as the angels before the throne, at the very moment that he has abundant cause to say, "Behold I am vile! I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes!" Job xl. 4; xlii. 6.

3. This powerful and prevalent intercession abundantly compensates for the poverty and narrowness of our prayers. Experience confirms what the scripture declares of our insufficiency to order our own cause before the Lord, to specify our various wants, and to fill our mouths with such arguments, as may engage the attention, and enliven the affections of our hearts. "We know not how to pray as we ought," Rom. viii. 26. And though the Holy Spirit teaches believers to form petitions, which, in the main, are agreeable to the will of God, yet we often mistake and ask amiss; we often forget what we ought to ask, and we are too often cold, negligent, weary, distracted, and formal in prayer. How prone are we to enter by prayer into the Lord's presence, as the thoughtless horse rushes into the battle! (Jer. viii. 6.) to speak to God as if we were only speaking into the air, and to have our thoughts dissipated and wandering to the ends of the earth, while his holy name is upon our polluted lips! It is well for us, that God is both able and gracious to do more than we can ask or think; but that he actually does so, for such unworthy creatures, is owing to our Intercessor. He knows all our wants, and pleads and provides accordingly. He is not negligent, though we too frequently are. He prayed for Peter's safety (Luke xxii. 31, 32,) before Peter himself was aware of his danger. Have we not sometimes been as it were surprised and shamed by the Lord's goodness, when he has condescended to bestow special and needful mercies upon us, before we thought of asking for them? These are affecting proofs of our Intercessor's attention and care, and that he is always mindful of us. But,

II. Jesus the High Priest is upon a throne. —He is a King, King of saints, and King of nations. He is not only a righteous advocate, but he possesses all authority and power. And it belongs to his office as King, effectually to manage for those in whose behalf he intercedes. I have already observed that the original word includes this sense.

1. He is the source and fountain of their supplies. All their springs are in him. The fulness of wisdom, grace, and consolation, out of which they are invited to receive, resides in him. And therefore he says, "If ye ask any thing in my name, I will do it," John xiv. 14. Not merely, I will present your petitions, but I will fulfil them myself. For all things are committed into his hands, and it is he with whom we have to do, Heb. iv. 13. He therefore enjoins us, if we believe or trust in God, to believe also in him, John xiv. 1. His invitations, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink;" (John vii. 37;)— "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely;" (Rev. xxii. 17;) equally express his sovereignty and his munificence. On him the eyes of all who know him wait from age to age, and are not disappointed. He opens his hand, and satisfies them with good, Psal. cxlv. 17. Nor is the store of his bounty diminished by all that he has distributed, for it is unsearchable and inexhaustible, like the light of the sun, which gladdens the eyes of millions at once, has done so from the beginning, and will continue to do so to the end of time.

2. He appoints and adjusts their various dispensations, with an unerring suitableness to their several states, capacities, and circumstances. If a skilful gardener had the command of the weather, he would not treat all his plants, nor the same plant at all times, exactly alike. Continual rain, or continual sunshine, would be equally unfavourable to their growth and fruitfulness. In his kingdom of providence, he so proportions the rain and the sunshine to each other, that the corn is usually brought forward from the seed to the blade, the ear, and the full ripe ear. And I believe it would be always so, were it not for the prevalence of sin, which sometimes makes the heavens over our head brass, the earth under our feet iron, (Deut. xxviii. 23,) and turns a fruitful land into barrenness. So, in his kingdom of grace, he trains his people up by various exercises. He delights in their prosperity, and does not willingly grieve them. But afflictions in their present state are necessary, and his blessing makes them salutary. But this is their great privilege, that their comforts and their crosses are equally from his hand, are equally tokens of his love, and alike directed to work together for their good. He appoints the bounds of their habitations, numbers the hairs of their heads, and is their guide and guard, their sun and shield, even unto death. Here they meet with many changes, but none that are unnoticed by him, none that can separate them from his love, and they all concur in leading them on to a state of unchangeable and endless joy, 2 Cor. iv. 17.

3. He is the Captain of their salvation, Heb. ii. 10. They are his soldiers, and fight under his eye; yet the battle is not theirs but his. Israel of old were to muster their

forces, to range themselves for the fight, to use every precaution and endeavour, as though success depended entirely upon themselves. Yet they obtained not the victory by their own sword, but it was the Lord who fought for them, and trod down their enemies before them; and they had little more to do than to pursue the vanquished, and to divide the spoil. And thus it is in the warfare which true christians maintain, not against flesh and blood only, but against principalities and powers, (Eph. vi. 12,) against the spirit of the world, and against Satan and his legions. They fight in his cause, but he upholds them and conquers for them. Their enemies are too many and too mighty for them to grapple with in their own strength; but he rebukes them, and pleads the cause of his people. His gracious interposition in their favour is beautifully set forth, together with its effects, in the vision which the prophet saw, when he was sent to encourage the rulers and people of the Jews against the difficulties they met with when rebuilding the temple. He saw Joshua the high priest, who, in that character, represented the collective body of the people, standing before the Lord, clothed in filthy garments, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him, Zech. iii. 1—4. Such is our attire as sinners, all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and such are the attempts of our enemy, to deter us from approaching to him who alone can relieve us, or to distress us when we appear before him. But when Joshua could not speak for himself, the Lord spake for him, claimed him for his own, as a brand plucked out of the fire, silenced his adversary, clothed him with change of raiment, and set a fair mitre upon his head. Thus David acknowledged the Lord's goodness in providing him a table in the midst of his enemies, (Psal. xxiii. 5,) who saw with envy his privileges, but were not able to prevent his enjoyment of them. Many a time the Lord thus comforts and feeds his people, while waiting on him in secret, or attending his public ordinances; and were our eyes opened, like the eyes of Elisha's servant, to behold what is very near, though unseen, we should feel the force of the psalmist's observation. The powers of darkness surround us; their malice against us is heightened by the favour of our good Shepherd toward us; they rage, but in vain; for though they could presently deprive us of peace, and fill us with anguish, if we were left exposed to their assaults, they are under a restraint, and can do nothing without his permission. When he is pleased to give quietness, who then can make trouble! Job xxxiv. 29. He preserves and provides for his sheep in the midst of wolves.

We may close this part of our subject with two or three reflections, which, though as to the substance of them I may have offered you before, are always seasonable and suitable, when we are speaking of the power and grace of Messiah.

1. How precious is this Saviour! How justly is he entitled to the chief place in the hearts of those who know him! In the work of salvation, from the first step to the last, he is all in all. If he had not died and risen again, we must have died for ever. If he had not ascended into heaven, there to appear in the presence of God for us, we must have been thrust down into the lowest hell. If he did not plead for us, we would not, we durst not offer a word in our own behalf. If he was not, on our part, engaged to keep us night and day, our enemies would soon be too hard for us. May we therefore give him the glory due to his name and cleave to him, and trust in him alone.

2. How safe are the people of whom he undertakes the care! While his eye is upon them, his ear open to their prayer, and his arm of power stretched out for their protection; while he remembers that word of promise upon which he himself has caused them to hope; while he retains that faithfulness which encouraged them to commit their souls to him, it is impossible that any weapon or stratagem formed against them can prevail. There are many, it is true, who will rise up against them; but God is for them, and with them a very present help in trouble, Ps. xlvi. 1. They are full of wants and fears, and in themselves liable to many charges; but since Jesus is their head, their security, their intercessor, no needful good shall be withheld from them, no charge admitted against them, none shall condemn them, for it is God himself who justifies the believer in Jesus.

3. If these things be so, how much are they to be pitied, who hear of them without being affected or influenced by them? Will you always be content with hearing? "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!" Ps. xxxiv. 8. Should you at last be separated from those with whom you now join in public worship; should you see them admitted into the kingdom of God, and you yourselves be thrust out; your present advantages would then prove an aggravation of your guilt and misery. As yet there is room. Strive to enter while the gate of mercy remains open. Think of the solemnities of that great day. Many will then be condemned, though they who believe in the Son of God will be justified. Consider who will condemn them, God himself, Ps. l. 6. From his inquisition there can be no retreat; from his sentence there can be no appeal. And consider what the condemnation will be; a final exclusion from his favour; a never-ceasing sense of his awful displeasure; a state of eternal horror and despair, without mitigation, without the smallest ray of hope! Can you deliberately give up all claim to happiness, and determine to rush upon the thick bosses of God's buckler, (Job xv. 26,) to defy his power, and to

dare his threatenings, rather than forego the transitory and delusive pleasures of sin? And can you do this with the gospel sounding in your ears? May the Lord prevent it! However, observe you are once more warned, once more invited. If now at last, after so many delays, so much perverseness on your part, you will honestly and earnestly seek him, he will be found of you. But if you persist in your obstinacy, your condemnation will be inevitable and sure.

SERMON XLVIII.

THE SONG OF THE REDEEMED.

—Thou—hast redeemed us to God, by thy blood (out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.) REV. v. 9.

THE extent, variety, and order of the creation, proclaim the glory of God. He is likewise *maximus in minimis.* The smallest of his works that we are capable of examining, such for instance as the eye or the wing of a little insect, the creature of a day, are stamped with an inimitable impression of his wisdom and power. Thus in his written word there is a greatness, considering it as a whole, and a beauty and accuracy in the smaller parts, analogous to what we observe in the visible creation, and answerable to what an enlightened and humble mind may expect in a book which bears the character of a divine revelation. A single verse, a single clause, when viewed (if I may so speak) in the microscope of close meditation, is often found to contain a fulness, a world of wonders. And though a connected and comprehensive acquaintance with the whole scripture be desirable and useful, and is no less the privilege than the duty of those who have capacity and time at their disposal to acquire it; yet there is a gracious accommodation to the weakness of some persons, and the circumstances of others. So that in many parts of scripture, whatever is immediately necessary to confirm our faith, to animate or regulate our practice, is condensed into a small compass, and comprised in a few verses; yea, sometimes a single sentence, when unfolded and examined, will be found to contain all the great principles of duty and comfort. Such is the sentence which I have now read to you. In the Messiah it is inserted in the grand chorus taken from the 12th and 13th verses of this chapter. And as it may lead us to a compendious recapitulation of the whole subject, and by the Lord's blessing, may prepare us to join in the following ascription of praise to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb; I propose to consider it in its proper connection as a part of the leading song of the redeemed before the throne, in which the angels cannot share, though from their love to redeemed sinners, and from their views of the manifold wisdom and glory of God in visiting such sinners with such a salvation, they cheerfully take a part in the general chorus.

The redemption spoken of, is suited to the various cases of sinners of every nation, people, and language. And many sinners of divers descriptions, and from distant situations, scattered abroad into all lands, through a long succession of ages, will, by the efficacy of this redemption, be gathered together into one, John xi. 52. They will constitute one family, united in one great Head, Eph. iii. 14, 15. When they shall fully attain the end of their hope, and encircle the throne, day without night, rejoicing, their remembrance of what they once were, their sense of the happiness they are raised to, and of the great consideration to which they owe their deliverance and their exaltation, will excite a perpetual joyful acknowledgment to this purport. They were once lost, but could contribute nothing to their own recovery. Therefore they ascribe all the glory to their Saviour. They strike their golden harps, and sing in strains, loud as from numbers without number, sweet as from blest voices, "Thou art worthy—for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

But though this song, and this joy, will only be consummated in heaven, the commencement takes place upon earth. Believers, during their present state of warfare, are taught to sing it; in feebler strains indeed, but the subject of their joy, and the object of their praise, are the same which inspire the harps and songs in the world of light. May I not say that this life is the time of their rehearsal? They are now learning their song, and advancing in meetness to join in the chorus on high, which, as death successively removes them, is continually increasing by the accession of fresh voices. All that they know, or desire to know, all they possess or hope for, is included in this ascription.

I take the last clause of the verse into the subject. The words suggest three principal points to our consideration:

I. The benefit,—Redemption to God.

II. The redemption price,—By thy blood.

III. The extent of the benefit,—To a people out of every kindred, and tongue, and nation.

I. Thou hast redeemed us to God.—Redemption or ransom is applicable to a state of imprisonment for debt, and to a state of bondage or slavery. From these ideas taken together, we may form some estimate of the misery of our fallen state; a theme, which, if I cannot insist upon at large in every discourse, I would never wholly omit. For we can neither understand the grace, nor enjoy

the comfort of the gospel, but in proportion as we have a heart-felt and abiding conviction of our wretched condition as sinners without it. They who think themselves whole, know not their need of a physician, (Matt. ix. 12,) but to the sick he is welcome.

If a man, shut up in prison for a heavy debt, which he is utterly incapable of discharging, should obtain his liberty, in consideration of payment made for him by another, he might be properly said to be redeemed from imprisonment. This supposition will apply to our subject. The law and justice of God have demands upon us which we cannot answer. We are therefore shut up, under the law, in unbelief, helpless, and hopeless, till we know and can plead the engagement of a surety for us. For a time, like Peter, we are sleeping in our prison (Acts xii. 6—10,) regardless of danger. The first sensible effect of the grace of God, is to awaken us from this insensibility. Then we begin to feel the horrors of our dungeon, and the strength of our chains, and to tremble under the apprehension of an impending doom. But grace proceeds to reveal the Saviour and friend of sinners, and to encourage our application to him. In a good hour the chains fall off, the bars of iron and brass are broken asunder, and the prison doors fly open. The prisoner understands that all his great debt is forgiven, blesses his deliverer, obtains his liberty, and departs in peace.

We are likewise in bondage, the servants, the slaves of a harder task-master than Pharaoh was to Israel. Satan, though not by right, yet by a righteous permission, tyrannizes over us, till Jesus makes us free, John viii. 34, 36. The way of transgressors is hard, Prov. xiii. 15. Though the solicitations and commands of that enemy who worketh in the children of disobedience (Eph. ii. 2,) are in some respects suited to our depraved inclinations, yet the consequences are grievous. A burdened conscience, a wasted constitution, a ruined fortune and character, swiftly and closely follow the habits of intemperance and lewdness; and they who seem to walk in a smoother path, are deceived, mortified, and disappointed daily. If persons who live openly and habitually in a course that is contrary to the rule of God's word, speak swelling words of vanity (2 Pet. ii. 18, 19,) and boast of their liberty, believe them not. We are sure they carry that in their bosom which hourly contradicts their assertions. Yea, sometimes their slavery is so galling, that they attempt to escape, but in vain. They are soon retaken, and their bonds made stronger. The issue of their short-lived reformations, which they defer as long as possible, and at last set about with reluctance, usually is, that their latter end proves worse than their beginning. At most, they only exchange one sinful habit for another, sensuality for avarice, or prodigality for pride. The strong one armed will maintain his dominion, till the stronger than he interposes and says, Loose him, and let him go, for I have found a ransom. Then, by virtue of the redemption-price, the prey is taken from the mighty, and the captive is delivered, Is. xlix. 24, 25. Then the enslaved sinner, like the man out of whom the legion was cast, sits at the feet of Jesus, in peace, and in his right mind, Mark v. 15. He becomes the Lord's freed-man.

For he is not only delivered from guilt and thrall, he is redeemed to God. He is now restored to his original state, as an obedient and dependent creature, devoted to his Creator, conformed to his will and image, and admitted to communion with him in love. These are blessings which alone can satisfy the soul, and without which it is impossible for man to be happy. While he is ignorant of his proper good, and seeks it in creatures, he is and must be wretched. Madness is in his heart, a deceived, disordered imagination turns him aside, and he feeds upon ashes, and upon the wind, Is. xlv. 20. But by grace he is renewed to a sound judgment, his mind receives a right direction, and he is turned from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, Acts xvi. 18.

II. What unspeakably, and beyond conception enhances the value of this deliverance, is the consideration of the means by which it is effected. For it is not merely a deliverance, but a redemption. It is not an act of mere mercy, but of mercy harmonizing with justice. It is not an act of power only, but of unexampled and expensive love.—"Thou has redeemed us by thy blood!"

The sentence denounced by the law against transgressors, was death. And therefore when Messiah became our surety, to satisfy the law for us, he must die. The expression of *his blood*, is often used figuratively for his death, perhaps to remind us how he died. His was a bloody death. When he was in his agony in Gethsemane, his sweat was as great drops of blood, falling down to the ground, Luke xxii. 44. His blood flowed when he gave his back to the smiters, under the painful strokes of the scourging he endured previous to his crucifixion. It flowed from his head, when the soldiers, having mocked his character of King by crowning him with thorns, by their rude blows forced the thorns into his temples. His blood streamed from the wounds made by the spikes, which pierced his hands and his feet, when they fastened him to the cross. When he hung upon the cross, his body was full of wounds, and covered with blood. And, after his death, another large wound was made in his side, from which issued blood and water. Such was the redemption-price he paid for sinners, his blood, the blood of his heart. Without shedding of blood there could be no remission.

Nor could any blood answer the great design, but his. Not any, not all the bloody sacrifices appointed by the law of Moses could take away sin, as it respects the conscience, nor afford a plea, with which a sinner could venture to come before the most high God, Micah vi. 6. But the blood of Messiah, in whom were united the perfections of the divine nature, and the real properties of humanity, and which the apostle therefore styles the blood of God, (Acts xx. 28,) this precious blood cleanses from all sin. It is exhibited as a propitiation of perpetual efficacy, by which God declares his righteousness, no less than his mercy, in forgiving iniquities, (Rom. iii. 24, 26,) and shows himself just to the demands of his holiness, and the honour of his government, when he accepts and justifies the sinner who believes in Jesus.

If these things were understood and attended to, would it be thought wonderful that this Saviour is very precious to those who believe in him, and who obtain redemption by his blood? How can it possibly be otherwise? Grace like this, when known, must captivate and fix the heart! Not only to save, but to die, and to die for his enemies! Such costly love, productive of such glorious consequences, and to such unworthy creatures! Surely the apostle's mind was filled and fired with these considerations, when authenticating an epistle with his own hand, he subjoined this emphatical close, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha!" 1 Cor. xvi. 22. Do you think, my brethren, that the apostle took pleasure in denouncing so severe a sentence against all those who did not see (as we say) with his eyes? Had he so little affection for sinners, that he could thus consign them to destruction by multitudes, for differing from him in what some persons only deem an opinion? Rather consider him, not as breathing out his own wishes, but as speaking in the name and on the behalf of God. He knew it must be, and he declared it would be so. It was no pleasure to him to see them determined to perish. On the contrary, he had great grief and sorrow of heart for them, even for the Jews, who had treated him with the greatest cruelty. Even for their sakes, he could have been content to be made an anathema himself (Rom. ix. 3,) that they might be saved. But upon the whole, he acquiesced in the will of God, and acknowledged it to be just, right, and equal, that if any man would not love the Lord Jesus Christ, after all that he had done and suffered for sinners, he should be accursed. By this comparison of the apostle's severe language with his compassionate temper, I am led to digress a little farther. It suggests an apology for ministers of the gospel in general. When we declare the terrors of the Lord, when we assure you that there is but one solid foundation for hope, and that, unless you love the Lord Jesus Christ, you must perish, some of our hearers account us bigoted, uncharitable, and bitter. But if you could see what passes in secret, how faithful ministers mourn over those who reject their message, how their disobedience cuts them to the heart, and abates the comfort they would otherwise find in your service; if you could believe us when we say (I trust truly) that we are ready to impart unto you, not the gospel of God only, but our own souls also, because you are dear to us, (1 Thess. ii. 8,) and we long for your salvation; then you would think more favourably of us. But after all we cannot, we dare not, soften our message to please men. What we find in the word of God, we must declare. It would be at the peril of our souls, to speak smooth things, to prophesy deceits (Is. xxx. 10,) to you; and, so far as we preach the truth, it will be at the peril of your souls, if we are disregarded.

III. The benefits of this redemption extend to a numerous people, who are said to be redeemed out of every kindred, tongue, and nation. I have, upon a former occasion,* offered you my sentiments concerning the extent of the virtue of that blood which taketh away the sin of the world. But the clause now before us invites me to make a few additional observations upon a subject which, I conceive, it much concerns us rightly to understand.

The redeemed of the Lord are those who actually experience the power of his redemption, who are delivered from the dominion of sin and Satan, and brought into a state of liberty, peace, and holiness. That the people of every kindred, nation, and tongue, are not redeemed in this sense universally, is as certain as evidence of facts, and express declarations of scripture can make it. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Multitudes, thus disqualified, will be found trembling, on the left hand of the Judge, at the great day. But a remnant will be saved, according to the election of grace. For they who differ, who are redeemed to the service of God, while others live and die in the love and service of sin, do not make themselves to differ, 1 Cor. iv. 7. It becomes the potsherds of the earth to ascribe to their Maker the glory of his sovereignty, and to acknowledge, that, if they have a good hope, it is because it pleased the Lord to make them his people who were once not his people, Hos. ii. 23. Yet a way of conceiving of the doctrines of the divine sovereignty, and of a personal election unto life, has often obtained, which seems to have a tendency to render the mind narrow, selfish, and partial, and to straiten the exercise of that philanthropy which the genius and spirit of the gospel powerfully inculcate.

* Sermon xvi.

The best of us, perhaps, are more prone than we are aware of to assimilate the great God to ourselves, and to frame our ideas of him too much according to our own image. So that often much of a man's natural disposition may be observed in the views he forms of the divine perfections and conduct; as, on the other hand, his conceptions of the character of God strengthen and confirm him in his own tempers and habits. There are persons, who being persuaded in their own minds (we would hope upon sure grounds) that they themselves are of the elect, appear to be little concerned what may become of others. Their notions of God's sovereignty, and his right to do what he will with his own, though often insufficient to preserve them from repining and impatience under the common events of human life, raise them above all doubts and difficulties on a subject which the apostle speaks of as unsearchable and untraceable; where he acknowledges depths which he was unable to fathom, (Rom. xi. 33,) all appears to them quite plain and easy; where he admires and adores, they arrogantly dispute, and determine *ex cathedra*, and harshly censure all who are not so eagle-sighted as themselves. Methinks they who know the worth of a soul, from its vast capacity for happiness and misery, and its immortal duration, cannot justly be blamed for allowing no limits to their benevolent wishes for the salvation of mankind, but the will of God, as it is plainly made known to us in his word. To this we are to submit, not as of necessity only, but cheerfully, assured that his will is wise, holy, and good; that the Judge of all the world will do right; and to wait for the day when he will condescend to clear up every difficulty, and give us that satisfaction which, in our present state of ignorance and weakness, we are incapable of receiving. Shall mortal man be more just, or can he be more merciful than God? It is a false compassion, founded in a blameable disregard of what is due to the glory of his great name, that prompts us to form a wish that his unerringly wise appointments could be otherwise than they are. Yet it is a comfort to think that his mercy, in which he delights, in which he is peculiarly said to be rich, and which is higher than the heavens, will, in its exercise, far exceed the bounds which some fallible mortals would peremptorily assign to it. We must not indulge conjecture and hypothesis farther than the scripture will warrant; but while we humbly depend upon this infallible light, we need not be afraid to follow it, though it should in some particulars, lead us a little beyond the outlines of some long received, and in the main very valuable human systems of divinity.

I have repeatedly expressed my belief, that many prophecies respecting the spread and glory of the kingdom of Messiah upon earth have not yet received their full accomplishment, and that a time is coming when many (perhaps the greater part of mankind) of all nations, and people, and languages, shall know the joyful sound of the gospel, and walk in the light of the Redeemer's countenance. At present, I would confine myself to consider what ground the scripture affords us to hope that there are many of every nation, people, and tongue, even now, singing this song before his throne.

The revelations vouchsafed to the beloved disciple in Patmos, exhibit a succession of great events, extending (I suppose) from the apostles' days to the end of time. But while only the learned can so much as attempt to ascertain from history the dates and facts to which the prophecies already fulfilled refer, or to offer probable conjectures concerning the events as yet future (in which the most judicious commentators are far from being agreed,) there are passages interspersed which seem designed to administer consolation to plain believers, by representations suited to raise their thoughts to the state of the church triumphant. Though they are unable to explain the particulars of what they read, there is a glory resulting from the whole, which animates their hope and awakens their joy. Of this kind I think is that vision, (Rev. vii. 9, *ad finem*,) in which the apostle saw the servants of God, who were sealed in their foreheads, in number a hundred and forty-four thousand; and besides these a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, and cried with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb," &c. I confess myself unable to expound this sublime passage, and to give the full or even the principal sense of it with certainty. But that it has some reference to what is now passing within the vail, which hides the unseen world from our view, I cannot doubt. I propose my thoughts upon it with caution and diffidence. I dare not speak with that certainty which I feel myself warranted to use, when I set before you from scripture the great truths which are essential to a life of faith in the Son of God; yet I hope to advance nothing that is contrary to scripture, or to any deductions fairly and justly drawn from it.

Having premised this acknowledgment of my incompetence to decide positively, I venture to say, that by the hundred and forty-four thousand sealed in their foreheads (a definite for an indefinite number, which is frequent in scripture language,) I understand those, who, living to mature age, and where the gospel is afforded, are enabled to make a public and visible profession of religion, and are marked as it were in their foreheads, and

know to whom they belong, by their open and habitual separation from the spirit and customs of the world which lieth in wickedness. And the exceeding great multitude, contradistinguished from these, I conceive to be those who are elsewhere styled the Lord's hidden ones; and that these are a great multitude indeed, gathered by him, who knows them that are his, out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues. I may distribute them into the following classes—

1. Infants.—I think it at least highly probable, that when our Lord says, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven," (Matt. xix. 14,) he does not only intimate the necessity of our becoming like little children in simplicity, as a qualification without which (as he expressly declares in other places) we cannot enter into his kingdom, but informs us of a fact, that the number of infants who are effectually redeemed to God by his blood, so greatly exceeds the aggregate number of adult believers, that, comparatively speaking, his kingdom may be said to consist of little children. The apostle speaks of them as not having "sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression," (Rom. v. 14,) that is, with the consent of their understanding and will. And when he says, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ," he adds, "that every man may give an account of what he has done in the body, whether it be good or bad," 2 Cor. v. 10. But children who die in their infancy have not done any thing in the body, either good or bad. It is true, they are by nature evil, and must, if saved, be the subjects of a supernatural change. And though we cannot conceive how this change is to be wrought, yet I suppose few are so rash as to imagine it impossible that any infants can be saved. The same power that produces this change in some, can produce it in all; and therefore I am willing to believe, till the scripture forbids me, that infants of all nations and kindreds, without exception, who die before they are capable of sinning after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who have done nothing in the body of which they can give an account, are included in the election of grace. They are born for a better world than this; they just enter this state of tribulation; they quickly pass through it; their robes are washed white in the blood of the Lamb, and they are admitted, for his sake, before the throne. Should I be asked to draw the line, to assign the age at which children begin to be accountable for actual sin, it would give me no pain to confess my ignorance.—The Lord knoweth.

2. A people hidden among the most degenerate communities, civil or ecclesiastical, that bear the name of Christian; where ignorance and superstition, or errors, which, though more refined, are no less contrary to the gospel, have a prevailing dominion and influence. What can be more deplorable, in the view of an enlightened and benevolent mind, than the general state of the Roman and Greek churches! where the traditions, inventions, and doctrines of men, a train of pompous and burdensome ceremonies, a dependence upon masses, penance, and pilgrimages, upon legends and fictitious saints, form the principal features of the public religion. Many nations are involved in this gross darkness, but they are not wholly destitute of the scripture; some portions of it are interwoven with their authorized forms of worship; and we cannot with reason doubt but a succession of individuals among them have been acquainted with the life and power of true godliness, notwithstanding the disadvantages and prejudices of their education. There are likewise amongst Protestants schemes of doctrines, supported by learning and by numbers, which are not more conformable to the standard of the New Testament than the grossest errors of Popery; and yet here and there persons may be met with, who, by the agency of the Holy Spirit, enabling them to understand the scriptures, are made wiser than their teachers; and who, though still fettered by some mistakes and prejudices, give evidence in the main, that their hopes are fixed upon the only atonement, that they are redeemed to God, and are partakers of that faith which worketh by love, purifies the heart, and overcometh the world.

3. I will go one step farther. The inferences that have been made by some persons from the apostle Peter's words, that "God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him," (Acts x. 34, 35,) are, undoubtedly, rash and unscriptural. They would conclude from thence, that it is of little importance what people believe, provided they are sincere in their way; that the idolatrous Heathens, even the most savage of them, whose devotion is cruelty, who pollute their worship with human blood, and live in the practice of vices disgraceful to humanity, are in a very safe state, because they act, as it is supposed, according to their light. "But if the light which is in them be darkness, how great is that darkness!" Such a lax candour as this tends to make the gospel unnecessary; if they who have it not are therefore excusable, though they neither love nor fear God, and live in open violation of the law of their nature. The declaration, that "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord," (Heb. xii. 14,) holds universally, and without a single exception. But if we suppose a Heathen, destitute of the means of grace, by which conversion is usually wrought, to be brought to a sense of his misery, of the emptiness and vanity of worldly things, to a

conviction that he cannot be happy without the favour of the great Lord of the world, to a feeling of guilt, and a desire of mercy; and that though he has no explicit knowledge of a Saviour, he directs the cry of his heart to the unknown Supreme to this purport, "*Ens entium, miserere mei*, Father and source of beings, have mercy upon me!"—who will prove that such views and desires can arise in the heart of a sinner, without the energy of that Spirit which Jesus is exalted to bestow? Who will take upon him to say, that his blood has not sufficient efficacy to redeem to God a sinner who is thus disposed, though he has never heard of his name? Or who has a warrant to affirm, that the supposition I have made is, in the nature of things, impossible to be realized? But I stop—I do not often amuse you with conjecture. And though for want of express warrant from scripture, I dare not give the sentiments I have now offered, a stronger name than probable, or conjectural, I hope I do not propose them for your amusement. They will prove to your advantage and my own, if they are helpful to guard us against a narrow, harsh, and dogmatical spirit; and if, without abating our reverend submission to the revealed will of God, they have a tendency to confirm our views of his goodness, and the power and compassions of the great Redeemer.

SERMON XLIX.

THE CHORUS OF ANGELS.

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing!—Rev. v. 12.

It was a good report which the queen of Sheba heard, in her own land, of the wisdom and glory of Solomon. It lessened her attachment to home, and prompted her to undertake a long journey to visit this greater king, of whom she had heard so much. She went, and she was not disappointed. Great as the expectations were which she had formed from the relation made her by others, they fell short of what she saw and heard herself, when she was admitted into his presence. Good, likewise, is the report of the gospel. It has a powerful effect upon those who receive it by faith. It is abundantly sufficient to convince them of the comparative insignificance of all that they most admired and esteemed in this world. From that hour they become strangers and pilgrims upon earth. They set out, in the way which God has prescribed, in hopes of seeing him who is greater than Solomon; and the report they have heard of him is their subject, their song, and their joy, while they are on their journey, and their great support, under the difficulties they meet with on the road. What then will it be to see him as he is? As yet, the one half is not told them. Or at least they are not yet capable of conceiving the half, or the thousandth part, of what they read in the scripture, concerning his wisdom, his glory, and his grace. We weaken, rather than enlarge, the sense of such a passage as this, by our feeble comments. We must die before we can understand it. To the bulk of mankind, "Wait the great teacher death," is cold, is dangerous advice. If they are not taught by the gospel while they live, the teaching of death will be too late. Dreadful will be the condition of those who cannot be convinced of their mistakes, till repentance and amendment will be impracticable. But death will be a great teacher, indeed, to a believer; he will then know more by a glance, and in a moment, of the happiness he is now expecting, than by all he could collect from the inquiry and experience of a long course of years in this world.

The scenery of this chapter, if attentively considered, is sufficient to snatch our thoughts from the little concernments of time, and to give us some anticipation of the employments and enjoyments of heaven. Come, all ye that are wearied and burdened with afflictions and temptations, look up, and for a while, at least, forget your sorrows! The Lamb is upon his throne, surrounded by a multitude of his redeemed people, who once were afflicted and burdened like yourselves; but now all tears are wiped from their eyes. They have a song peculiarly their own, and are represented as taking the first and leading part in worship and praise. The angels cannot sing their song, they were not redeemed to God by his blood; but they are interested in the subject. Their highest views of the manifold wisdom of God are derived from the wonders of redemption. Therefore they join in the chorus, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." If you have a humble hope of bearing a part in this immortal song, will you hang down your heads like a bulrush, because you have the honour of following your Lord through many tribulations to his kingdom?

The number of the angels is expressed indefinitely, ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; myriads, and millions; to intimate to us, that, with respect to our capacities and conceptions, they are innumerable. Their number is known to him who telleth the number of the stars and calleth them all by their names, (Psalm cxlvii. 4,) and to him only. The scripture intimates a diversity of ranks and orders among them, Thrones, dominions, principalities, and pow-

ers; but as to particulars, there is little said that might gratify our curiosity. It is enough for us to know, that the highest of them, and that all of them, worship him who is clothed in our nature. My text expressly informs us, that the object of their worship is the Lamb that was slain. Not that the humanity of Christ, which is but a creature, is simply and formally, the object of their worship; but they worship him who has assumed the human nature into personal union with himself; God manifest in the flesh, God in Christ. Though the world censure or despise us for honouring the Son as we honour the Father, (John v. 23,) we have here a good precedent, as we have in many places of scripture, the warrant of an express command. Whether men are pleased or not, we will, we must, worship the Lamb that was slain. To animate our devotion, let us thankfully consider, Why he was slain, and How he was slain.

I. Why he was slain.—The redeemed say, For us. "He loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," Rev. i. 5. They were sinners and enemies; they were slaves to sin and Satan; yet he loved them, and died to redeem them. It is by virtue of his blood and death that they are now before the throne. Nothing less than his death could have made them duly sensible of their misery, nothing less could have relieved them from it. He was lifted up upon the cross, that by the powerful magnetism of his dying love, he might, in the hour of his grace, draw their hearts to himself, John xii. 32. This was the design, this was the effect of his sufferings. A crucified Saviour, though a stumbling-block to the self-righteous, and foolishness to vain reasoners, was to them the power and the wisdom of God for salvation. They looked unto him, and were enlightened; they trusted in him, and were not ashamed. By faith in his name, they obtained peace with God, they renounced the ways of sin, they warred the good warfare, they overcame the world, and were at length made more than conquerors. For his sake they endured the cross, and despised the shame. They met with bad treatment from the world, but it was from the world that crucified him. While they were here their characters were obscured by their own imperfections, and by the misrepresentations and reproaches of their enemies. But now their reproach is removed, and they shine, each one like the sun, in the kingdom of their Father, Matt. xiii. 43. What an immense constellation of suns! This their full salvation was the joy set before him, for the sake of which he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And now they see him as he is, they ascribe all their victories and honours to him, and unite in one song of endless praise to the Lamb that was slain.

II. Their praises are heightened, when they consider, How he was slain. He did not die a natural death. He was slain. Nor did he fall like a hero, by an honourable wound in the field of battle. The impression which the death of the late General Wolfe made upon the public, is not yet quite forgotten. He conquered for us, but it cost him his life. But he died honourably, and was lamented by his country. Not so the Lamb of God. He died the death of a slave, of a malefactor. Cruelty, malice, and contempt, combined to give his sufferings every possible aggravation. And after he was slain, very few laid it to heart. The world went on as it did before, as though nothing extraordinary had happened. But on this dark ground the perfections of God were displayed in their fullest lustre; and they are the perfections of the great Redeemer, and therefore distinctly ascribed to him by the angels in the words which follow —"Power and wisdom, and riches, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

Though each of these words have a distinct sense, a nicety in defining them, and stating their precise meaning is of less importance than to feel the combined efficacy of them all, to impress our hearts with sentiments of reverence, confidence and love. The fulness of expression may teach us, that every kind of excellence is the indubitable right and possession of the Lamb that was slain. He is worthy to have them all attributed to him in the most absolute sense, and consequently worthy of our adoration, dependence, and praise.

1. Power.—It is spoken once, yea, twice we have heard the same, that power belongeth unto God, Ps. lxii. 11. It belongeth to him eminently and exclusively. All the power of creatures is derived from him. Such is the power of the Lamb. He styles himself ὁ Παντοκράτωρ, the Omnipotent, the Upholder and Possessor of all things, Rev. i. 8, 11. He exercises this power in the human nature, Matt. xxviii. 18. He doth what he pleaseth in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, (Dan. iv. 35;) and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? He has, therefore, all sufficiency, and uncontrollable authority, for the discharge of his office, as the Mediator and head of his church. The divine perfections being infinite, are not distinct in themselves, though the scripture, in condescension to our weakness, authorizes us to speak of them as distinguishable. God is one. And the power which can preserve and govern the world, involves in the idea of it every other excellence, which is separately mentioned in this passage.

2. Wisdom.—He is the only wise God, and our Saviour, Jude 25. His knowledge is perfect, his plan is perfect. In himself he is

essentially the wisdom of God, (Prov. viii. 22,) and he is our wisdom, 1 Cor. i. 30. It is life eternal to know the only true God, (John xvii. 3,) and therefore it is life eternal to know Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. For he is the only way, and the only door to this knowledge; no one can come unto God, or attain to any just conceptions of him, but in and by the Son of his love, who so perfectly represents God to us, is so completely the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, that whoso hath seen him, hath seen the Father, John xiv. 9. By him is opened to us the unsearchable wisdom of the divine counsels, particularly in the great work of redemption. "No one hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath revealed him," John i. 18. It is by wisdom communicated from him, that his people are made wise unto salvation. Though there are few scholars and philosophers among them, and many of them are despised for their ignorance and weakness, yet in truth they have all a good understanding, for they know the Lord and his will; they know wherein their proper happiness consists, and how it is to be obtained. They are instructed how to walk and to please God, how to bear afflictions with patience, and to meet death with composure. This wisdom is far superior to that of the schools. But he bestows and maintains it. The eyes of their mind are opened, and they see by his light; but they have no light of their own, or in themselves. They wait upon him for direction in every difficulty, for the solution of every hard question which perplexes their spirits; and he makes the crooked straight, teaches them to avoid the snares that are laid for them, or extricates them when entangled. Therefore in time, and to eternity, they will admire and adore his wisdom.

3. Riches.—All the stores of mercy, grace, and comfort, are in him, as light in the sun, or water in the ocean. The apostle, speaking of the unsearchable riches of Christ, (Eph. iii. 8,) gives us the idea of a mine, the height, length, depth, and breadth of which cannot be investigated, nor the immense wealth it contains exhausted. Of this fulness the poor are invited to receive freely, and multitudes from age to age have been enriched, and the treasure is still undiminished. None are sent away empty; and when all have been supplied, it will be full as at first.

4. Strength.—That energy and efficacy of his power, by which he accomplishes his holy purposes. Who can conceive of this? How just is the psalmist's reasoning, "He that formed the eye, shall not he see? He that planted the ear, shall not he hear?" Ps. xciv. 9. So we may say, How strong is he from whom all created strength is derived, and before whom the strength of all creatures, if collected into one effort, would be as chaff before the whirlwind! The Lord of all power and might speaks, and it is done; he commandeth and it standeth fast. Though the waves of the stormy sea toss themselves, they cannot prevail; (Ps. xciii. 3, 4;) he checks them in the height of their rage, setting bounds to their violence which they cannot pass, saying, "Hitherto shalt thou come and no farther, and here shall thy proud billows be stayed," Job xxxviii. 10, 11. With equal sovereignty, certainty, and ease, he rules over moral agents. He formed the heart of man, and he can fill it with terror or with comfort in a moment, in any assignable circumstances. He can make it happy in a dungeon, (Acts xvi. 25,) or impress it with dismay and despair upon a throne, Dan. v. 5, 6. All hearts are thus incessantly under his influence. And the hedge of his promise and protection surrounds those who trust in him, as with mountains, and walls of brass and fire, impenetrable to the assaults of the powers of darkness, unless so far as he, for wise and holy ends, is pleased to give permission. With the arm of his strength he upholdeth them that are falling, and raiseth up them that are bowed down, (Ps. cxlv. 14,) and is, in one and the same instant, a present and immediate help in trouble to all who call upon him, Ps. xlvi. 1. Therefore they that abide under his shadow are safe; they pass unhurt through floods and flames, because their Redeemer is strong. And when, in defiance of all their enemies he has brought them together in his heavenly kingdom, they will, with one consent, ascribe unto the Lord glory and strength.

5. Honour.—He is the fountain of it. All the honour of his creatures, and of his people, is from him; as the sun beautifies and gilds the objects he shines upon, which, without him are opaque and obscure. Because his people are precious in his sight, they are honourable. He clothes them with the garments of salvation, covers them with a robe of righteousness as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels, Is. lxi. 10. But who can speak of his own inherent honour, as God-man and Mediator! We must wait till we see him, without a cloud or vail, receiving the homage and adoration of angels and men. For as yet the one-half cannot be told us. Then, however, it will be universally known, that he who possesses the fulness of wisdom and power, riches and strength, is worthy to receive all honour. Ah! how different will he then appear, from that humble form he once assumed, when, for our sakes, he was a man of sorrows, despised, rejected, and nailed to the ignominious cross!

6. Glory.—The manifestation of God, that by which he is known and magnified, in the view of finite intelligences: the result, the combined effulgence of his holiness, grace

wisdom, truth, and love: this is his glory, and this glory is revcaled and displayed in Christ. He is glorious in his works of creation and providence, but these do not fully exhibit his character. But in the Lamb upon the throne shines his glory, full-orbed. And all in heaven, and all in earth, who behold it, take up the song of Moses and the Lamb, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord? Who is like unto thec, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders!—Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty! just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints!" Exod. xv. 11; Rev. xv. 3.

7. Blessing.—He is the author of all blessings, of all the happiness and good which his people receive, and he is the deserved object of their universal praise. The different senses in which we use the word *blessing*, taken together, may express that intercourse or communion which is between the head and the mystical members of his body. He blesses them effectually with the light of his countenance, with liberty, grace, and peace. He blesses them daily. His mercies are renewed to them every morning. He will bless them eternally. Blessed are the people who have this Lord for their God. They can make him no suitable returns, yet in their way they bless him. They admire, adore, and praise him. They call upon all the powcrs of their souls to bless him. They proclaim his goodness, and that hc is worthy to receive the ascription of power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. In proportion to their attainments in this delightful exercise of worship, love, and gratitude, they enjoy a heaven upon earth; and to stand before him continually, to behold his glory, to live under the unclouded beams of his favour, and to be able to bless and praise him as they ought, without weariness, abatement, interruption, or end, is what they mean when they speak of the heaven they hope for hereafter. Such is the blessedness of those who have already died in the Lord. They see his face, they drink of the rivers of pleasure which are at his right hand, they cast down their crowns before him, and say, thou art worthy.—Let us not be slothful, (Heb. vi. 12,) but followers of them who, through faith and patience, have finished their coursc, and are entered into the joy of their Lord.

Of all this glory and honour the scripture declares the Lamb that was slain to be worthy. Wisdom, riches, and strength, arc his. His power is infinite, his authority supreme. He is the author and giver of all good. He has life in himself, and he is the life of all that live; the Lord and Head of the church and of the universe. Can language express, or can heart conceive, a higher ascription and acknowledgment than this? Can all this be due to a creature? to one of a derived and dependent character? Then surely the scripture would have a direct tendency to promotc idolatry. Far be the thought from us! The scripture teaches us the knowledge of the true God, and the worship due to him. Therefore Messiah, the Lamb that was slain, is the true God, the propcr and immediate object of the worship of angels and of men.

Let us therefore take up a lamentation for those who slight the glorious Redeemer, and refuse him the honour due to his name. Their mistake should excite, not our anger or scorn, but our pity and prayers. Are there any such amongst us? Alas, my fellow-sinners, you know not what you do! Alas! you know him not, nor do you know yourselves. I am well aware that a thousand arguments of mine will not persuade you; but I can simply tell you what would soon make you at least desirous of adopting our sentiments upon this subject. If he who has that power over the heart which I have been speaking of, was pleased to give you this moment a scnse of the holiness and authority of God, and of your conduct towards him as his creatures, your strongest objections to the high honours we attribute to the Saviour would this moment fall to the ground, and you would be immediately convinced, that either Jesus Christ is the true God and eternal life, or that you must perish. You would no longer expect mercy but in a way perfectly consonant with the righteousness and truth of God declared in his word, and with the honour and purity of his moral government. This would lead you to perceive thc necessity of an atonement, and the insufficiency of any atonement but that which the Lamb of God has made by the sacrifice of himself, (Heb. ix. 26,) and that the efficacy even of his mediation depends upon his divine character. The scriptural doctrines of the depravity of man, the malignity of sin, the eternal power and Godhead of the Saviour, the necessity and efficacy of his mediation, and the inevitable, extreme, and endless misery of those who finally reject him, are so closely connected, that if the first be rightly understood, it will open the mind to the rcception of the rest. But till the first be known and felt, the importance and certainty of the others will be suspccted, if not openly denied.

Though the doctrines I have enumerated are, in these sceptical days, too generally disputed and contradicted, I am fully confident that it is impossible to demonstrate them to be false. Upon the lowest supposition, therefore, they possibly may be true; and the consequences depending upon them, if they should be found true at last, are so vastly momentous, that even the peradventure, the possibility of their truth, renders them deserving of your most serious consideration. Trifle

with yourselves no longer. If they be truths, they are the truths of God. Upon the same authority stands the truth of that gracious promise that he will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him. Let me entreat you to make the experiment. This is the proper point to begin with. Instead of indulging reasonings and speculations, humble yourselves before the Lord, and pray for the light and influence which he has said he will afford to them who are willing to be taught. Read the scripture with deliberation, and do not labour to fortify yourselves against conviction. Break off from those practices, which your own consciences admonish you cannot be pleasing to him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Then shall you know if you will sincerely follow on to know the Lord, Hos. vi. 3. But if not, if you will, in a spirit of levity, presume to decide upon points which you will not allow yourselves seriously to examine, should you at last perish in your obstinacy and unbelief, your ruin will be of yourselves. You have been faithfully warned, and we shall be clear of your blood.

SERMON L.

THE UNIVERSAL CHORUS.

(And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying,) Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever!—Rev. v. 13.

MEN have generally agreed to dignify their presumptuous and arrogant disquisitions on the works and ways of God with the name of wisdom, though the principles upon which they proceed, and the conclusions which they draw from them, are for the most part evident proofs of their depravity and folly. Instead of admiring the effects of his wisdom and power in the creation, they have rashly endeavoured to investigate the manner of its production. A variety of hypotheses have been invented to account for the formation of the world, and to state the laws by which the frame of nature is governed; and these different and inconsistent accounts have been defended with a magisterial tone of certainty, and an air of demonstration, by their respective authors, as though they had been bystanders and spectators when God spoke all things into being, and produced order out of confusion by the word of his power. They have, however, been much more successful in showing the absurdity of the schemes proposed by others, than in reconciling their own to the sober dictates of plain common sense.

But if, by indulging their speculations on the creation of the world, the causes of the deluge, and similar subjects, their employment has been no better than weaving spider's webs, the result of their reasoning on morals has been much worse. Here they have with industry hatched cockatrice eggs; (Isa. lix. 5;) and their labours have been not only fallacious, but mischievous. Their metaphysical researches, while they refuse the guidance of revelation, if pursued to their just consequences, will always lead into the labyrinths of scepticism, weaken the sense of moral obligation, rob the mind of the most powerful motives of right conduct, and of the only consolations which can afford it solid support in an hour of trouble. One insuperable difficulty which they will undertake to solve, though it does not properly lie in their way, is concerning the origin of evil. That evil is in the world, is felt and confessed universally. The gospel points out an effectual method of deliverance from it; but alas, the simple and infallible remedy is neglected, and men weary themselves with vain inquiries,

> And find no end, in wandering mazes lost.

The more they reason, the more they involve themselves in uncertainty and error, till at last they make lies their refuge, and adopt, with implicit credulity, as so many undoubted axioms, opinions, which are equally dishonourable to God, and contradictory to truth and experience, 2 Thess. ii. 11. Thus much is certain, that by the occasion of evil, the character of God is manifested with superior glory to the view of angels and men, who are in a state of holiness and allegiance, and a higher accent is thereby given to their praises; for now his justice and his mercy, which could not have been otherwise known, are revealed in the strongest light; and the redemption of sinners affords the brightest display of his wisdom and love.

The redeemed are represented as taking the first part in this sublime song, verses 8—10. The angels join in the chorus, verses 11, 12, which now becomes universal. All the angels, all the saints upon the earth, in the state of the dead, or *hades*, whether their bodies are buried under the earth, or in the sea, with one heart, aim and voice, unite in worship and praise. In the preceding verse, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, are ascribed unto the Lamb; but here the ascription is unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. I shall not add to what I have already observed to you from the words of the doxology. A few remarks, which offer from this verse taken in connection with the former, will bring me to a conclusion of the whole subject. And oh! for a coal of fire from the heavenly altar to warm your hearts and mine, that our love,

joy, and gratitude may be awakened into lively exercise, and that the close of our meditations on the Messiah may leave us deeply impressed with desires and well-grounded hopes of meeting ere long before the throne, to join with the angels and the redeemed in singing the praise of God and the Lamb!

I. The Lord Jesus is not only the Head of the church redeemed from among men, but of the whole intelligent creation that is in willing subjection to God. It belonged to his great design to gather together in one, (to reduce under one head, as the Greek expression is,) even in himself, all things that are in heaven and upon earth, Eph. i. 10. He is the Lord and the life both of angels and of men. Mutability and dependence are essential to the state of creatures, however exalted; and the angels in glory owe their preservation and confirmation in holiness and happiness to him. Hence they are styled the elect angels (1 Tim. v. 21,) in distinction from those who left their first habitation, and sunk into sin and misery. Angels therefore constitute a branch of that great family which is named of him in heaven and earth. And having made peace by the blood of his cross, he has effected a reconciliation, not only between God and sinners, but also between angels and men. How those inhabitants of light are disposed to sinful men, considered as sinful, we may learn from many passages of scripture. They are devoted to God, filled with zeal for his honour, and wait but for his command to execute vengeance upon his enemies. When Herod, infatuated by his pride, and by the flattery of the multitude, received their idolatrous compliment with complacence, an angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory, Acts xii. 23. The pestilence which destroyed the people towards the end of David's reign, was under the direction of an angel (2 Sam. xxiv. 16, 17,) and David saw him with his arm stretched out against Jerusalem. And in this prophecy angels are spoken of as employed in pouring forth the vials of wrath upon the earth. And still they are ready, we may believe, to avenge their Maker's cause upon the wicked when they are commissioned. And if the history of modern times was written by an inspired pen, and events, as in the scriptures, were assigned to their proper causes, perhaps the death of many a haughty worm would be recorded in words to this effect—"And an angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory." But, viewing sinners as the subjects of redemption, the angels copy from their Lord. They regard them with benevolence, and rejoice over every one that repenteth, Heb. i. 14. They willingly attend on them, and assist them, in ways beyond our conception. They esteem believers in Jesus as their fellow-servants, Rev. xxii. 9. We have reason to think that they are present in our worshipping assemblies; and, perhaps, always so present, that they could discover themselves to us in a moment, were it consistent with the rules of the divine government established in this lower world, suited to the state of those who are to walk by faith, not by sight. Thus far however differing in other respects, the angels and the redeemed are united and related in one common head, and have fellowship in worship and service. When sinners are enabled by grace to renounce this world, they are admitted to an honourable alliance with a better.

II. From hence we may form some judgment of the true nature and high honour of that spiritual worship, which is the privilege and glory of the church of God under the gospel-dispensation. When we meet in the name of Jesus, as his people, and with a due observance of his institutions, we come to the innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and church of the first born, (Heb. xii. 22, 23,) the first-born ones (for the expression is plural.) We draw nigh by faith to the very gate of heaven, to the holiest of all. Men unacquainted with spirituality, are soon weary even of the form of worship, unless their minds are amused by a splendid ceremonial. The first rise and subsequent increase of that pomp and pageantry, which in some countries has quite obscured the simplicity and beauty of gospel-worship, is to be ascribed to this indisposition of the human mind. Our thoughts, while we are in a natural state, are too weak and wavering, and too gross to be pleased with a worship, in which there is nothing suited to affect the imagination by sensible objects. And therefore, when men think themselves wise, and profess to despise the pageantry which captivates the vulgar, their wisdom affords them no real advantage if they have nothing better to substitute in the room of what they reject as insignificant. The very appearance of devotion will languish, they will grow remiss, and neglect the sabbath and public assemblies, for want of something to keep up their attention. We have abundant proof of this in our own land, and at this time. Protestants pride themselves in not being Papists; but, when the Protestant religion is understood to mean no more than a renunciation of the superstitious ceremonies of the church of Rome, it is, with respect to individuals, little, if at all, better than Popery itself. Among us enlightened Protestants, no expedient but preaching the gospel of Christ will be found sufficient to retain people in a stated observance of the Lord's day. But true believers, who understand and love the gospel, do indeed draw nigh to God; and they account a day in his courts better than a thousand, (Ps. lxxxiv. 10,) because they can take a part in the songs of heaven, and in spirit and in truth, worship him that sitteth upon the throne, and the Lamb who re-

deemed them to God by his blood. They know by happy experience, that his promise, to be in the midst of those who assemble in his name, is truth. Their worship is not a mere bodily service, a lifeless form, a round of observances, which neither warm the heart, nor influence the conduct; but they are instructed, comforted, and strengthened, by waiting upon God. Their spiritual senses are exercised; they behold his glory in the glass of the gospel, they hear his voice, they feel an impression of his power and presence, they taste his goodness, and the virtue of that name, which is as ointment poured forth, perfumes their tempers and conversation.

III. Though the Lamb is worthy of all blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, there is a distinct ascription of praise to Him that sitteth upon the throne.

The scripture, which alone can teach us to form right conceptions of God, and to worship him acceptably, guides us in a medium, between opposite errors and mistakes. Too many persons, ignorant of their own state as sinners, and of the awful majesty and holiness of the Most High, presume to think of him, to speak of him, and in their way, to speak to him, without being aware of the necessity of a Mediator. But they who are without Christ, who is the only door and way to the Father, are without God, atheists in the world, Eph. ii. 12. There is a mistake likewise on the other hand, when, though the Deity of the Saviour be acknowledged, yet what we are taught of the ineffable distinction in the Godhead is not duly attended to. It is written, "In the beginning,—the Word was God," John i. 1. It is likewise written, "The Word was with God." This latter expression undoubtedly has a meaning which though perfectly consistent, is not coincident with the former. The truth contained in it is proposed, not to our curiosity as a subject of speculation, but to our faith. I do not attempt to explain it. But, what God expressly declares, we are bound, upon the principles of right reason, to believe. For he is Truth, and cannot deceive us. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost," 1 John v. 7. These three are frequently spoken of in the scripture—to each of them a distinct part in the economy of salvation is ascribed; to each of them the perfections and honours of Deity are attributed. Yet there are not three Gods, but one. Consequently these three are one God. This doctrine may be above our comprehension, but cannot be contrary to our reason, if it be contained in a revelation from God. If it be simply received upon the authority of the revealer, it approves itself to be true, for it is found to be a key to the whole scripture, which renders the general sense and scope everywhere consistent and plain. They who proudly reject it, and yet admit the Bible to be a divine revelation, are involved in difficulties from which all their sagacity and learning cannot free them. In vain they labour by singular interpretations, by the minutiæ of criticism, and by an appeal to various readings and ancient versions, which, in a few passages, differ from the copies more generally received—in vain they endeavour by these refinements to relieve themselves, when pressed by the obvious and natural sense of a thousand texts, which confirm the faith and hope of plain christians. The gospel is designed for the poor. But the poor and unlearned would be at a great disadvantage, if the scripture could not be rightly understood without the assistance of such learning and such criticism as we often see pressed into the service. But the Holy Spirit graciously leads those who pray for his teaching, into such views of this high subject as are sufficient to comfort their hearts, and to animate their obedience. The faith of those who are taught of God, is exercised in their approaches to him under two different modifications. Both are scriptural, and therefore both are safe, and witnessed to by his gracious acceptance and blessing.

1. They come to God by Christ. They have access through him, Eph. ii. 18. Unworthy to speak for themselves, they bow their knees in his name, Phil. ii. 10. Christians are sufficiently distinguished and described by saying, They come to God by him, Heb. vii. 25. They come to God, they cannot live without him in the world, as they once did. They are now conscious of wants and desires, which only God can satisfy; but they are conscious likewise that they are sinners, and therefore they durst not approach him, if they had not the invitation of his promise, and an assurance of an Advocate with the Father, 1 John ii. 2.

2. They come to God in Christ. He is the great Temple, in whom all fulness dwells (Col. i. 19; ii. 9;) and they are not afraid of idolatry, when they worship and honour the Son even as the Father. This distinct application to God, in the person of the Son of his love, perhaps becomes more frequent and familiar as they advance in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour, 2 Peter iii. 18. They who seek to him for deliverance from sin and misery, at first, I believe, chiefly consider him as the Advocate and High Priest, who, by the virtue of his atonement, and the prevalence of his intercession, is able to save to the uttermost. But when the apostle distributes Christians, according to their growth in grace, into the state of babes, young men, and fathers (1 John ii. 4,) he speaks of a more distinct and appropriate knowledge of him who is from the beginning, as the peculiar privilege and distinguishing attainment of the fathers. He speaks of him who is from the beginning, so often that we can be at no

loss to determine whom he intends by the expression. He applies it to him who was in the beginning with God (John i. 1,) and whom ne and the other apostles had heard, had seen with their eyes, and touched with their hands, 1 John i. 1—3. An eminent divine* points out some special seasons in the Christian life, in which he thinks the peculiar pressures of the soul may obtain the most sensible and immediate relief, by direct application to the Saviour. But there are some believers who find themselves almost continually in one or other of the situations which he marks as occasional. However this may be, I am ready to take it for granted, that they who really and cordially believe the Deity of Christ, do at least at some seasons, and upon some occasions, expressly direct their prayers to him. If precedents be required to warrant this practice, the New Testament will furnish them in abundance. I shall select but a few. The apostle Paul bowed his knees to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus; but he often prayed to the Lord Jesus; He prayed to him in the temple (Acts xxii. 17—21,) and when he obtained that answer, "My grace is sufficient for thee," 2 Cor. xii. 9. To him the prayer of the apostles and disciples was addressed previous to the lot which was to determine a successor to Judas, Acts i. 24. And to him Stephen committed his departing spirit (Acts vii. 59,) an act of trust and worship of the highest kind, and at the most solemn season. In short, it is a strange inconsistence, if any, who acknowledge his Deity, question the propriety of praying to him. What is it, more or less, than to question the propriety of praying to God?

IV. This solemn worship and praise is referred ultimately to him who sitteth upon the throne—to the great and glorious God, thus known and manifested in, and by, and with the Lamb that was slain.

The mediatorial kingdom of Christ will have a period. He will reign as Mediator, till he has subdued all enemies under his feet, and perfected his whole work. Then his kingdom in this sense will cease; he will deliver it up to the Father, that God may be all in all, 1 Cor. xv. 28. This passage is difficult, that is, the subject is too great for our faculties in their present state of imperfection fully to comprehend; for the difficulties we meet with in scripture are more properly to be ascribed to our ignorance. The Son, as man, is even now subject to the Father: and God is undoubtedly all in all, at present, and from everlasting to everlasting. But his kingdom here is to be taken figuratively for the subjects of his kingdom, his people, whom he received as a trust and a treasure. These he will deliver up, and the form of his administration and government over them will be changed. They will then have no more sins to confess; there will be no more dangers requiring the care and tenderness of a Shepherd, no enemies to be controlled, and the ordinances and means of grace, accommodated to their wants and weakness, while in this world, will be no longer necessary. But Messiah, the Lamb that was slain, will ever be the head and Lord of the creation, the medium of communication of the light and love of God to his people, and God in him, the object of their eternal adoration and praise.

Then the grand, ultimate, final cause of all the manifestations of God will be completely obtained. The glory of the great Creator and Lawgiver, the splendour of all his perfections will for ever shine, without a vail or cloud, and with a brightness which could not have been known by creatures, had not the entrance of evil given occasion for a display of his wisdom and love, in over-ruling it to the praise of his glorious grace.

Thus, according to the measure of my ability and experience, I have endeavoured to point out to you the meaning and importance of the well chosen series of scriptural passages, which are set to music in the Oratorio of the Messiah. Great is the Lord Messiah, and greatly to be praised! I have attempted to set before you a sketch of what the scripture teaches us concerning his person, undertakings, and success,—the misery of those whom he came to save, the happiness to which he raises them, and the wonderful plan and progress of redeeming love. But who is sufficient for these things? Alas! how small a portion of his ways are we able to trace! But I would be thankful, that the desire of attempting this great subject was put into my heart, and that having obtained help of God, I have been preserved and enabled to finish my design. Imperfect as my execution of it has been, I cannot doubt that the various topics I have been led to insist on are the great truths of God. For what is properly my own, the defects and weaknesses which mix with my best services, I entreat his forgiveness, and request your candour. But I do not hesitate to say, that the substance of what I have advanced deserves and demands your most serious attention.

It is probable, that those of my hearers who admire this Oratorio, and are often present when it is performed, may think me harsh and singular in my opinion, that of all our musical compositions this is the most improper for a public entertainment. But while it continues to be equally acceptable whether performed in a church or in the theatre, and while the greater part of the performers and of the audience are the same at both places, I can rate it no higher than as one of the many fashionable amusements which mark

* Dr. Owen, in his Christologia.

the character of this age of dissipation. Though the subject be serious and solemn in the highest sense, yea, for that very reason, and though the music is, in a striking manner, adapted to the subject, yet, if the far greater part of the people who frequent the Oratorio, are evidently unaffected by the Redeemer's love, and uninfluenced by his commands, I am afraid it is no better than a profanation of the name and truths of God, a crucifying the Son of God afresh. You must judge for yourselves. If you think differently from me, you will act accordingly.—Yet permit me to hope and to pray, that the next time you hear the Messiah, God may bring something that you have heard in the course of these sermons, nearly connected with the peace and welfare of your souls, effectually to your remembrance.

I would humbly hope, that some persons, who were strangers to the power and grace of Messiah, when I entered upon this service, are now desirous of seeking him with their whole hearts. Yes, I trust I have not laboured wholly in vain. The gospel is the rod of his strength, (Psal. cx. 2,) which, when accompanied by the power of his Spirit, produces greater effects than the wonder-working rod of Moses. It causes the blind to see, the deaf to hear, and the dead to live. A faithful minister will account a single instance of success a rich recompense for the labour of a life. May this joy be mine! May the Lord encourage you to go on seeking him! Then he will surely be found of you. An open door is set before you, (Rev. iii. 8,) and if you are truly willing to enter, none shall be able to shut it.

But may I not fear, that I am still speaking to others, who, to this hour, have no cordial admiring thoughts of the great Saviour? Alas! should you die in your present frame of mind! let me, once more, entreat you to consider what your situation and employment will be, when all his redeemed people, and all his holy angels, shall join in worshipping and praising him, in the great day of his appearance.

Unless you repent, lay down your arms, and submit to his golden sceptre, your doom is already pronounced. Awful are the words of the Lord, by the prophet, and very applicable to your case, if (which may his mercy prevent!) you should die in your sins. "Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, behold my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty; behold my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: behold my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit," Isa. lxv. 13, 14. If the scribes and Pharisees were filled with envy and grief when the children in the temple sung Hosanna to the Son of David, (Matt. xxi. 15,) what must be their anguish and remorse, their rage and despair, when the whole creation shall join in his praise? If your thoughts of him now are like theirs, tremble at your danger; for unless you repent, your lot must be with them hereafter.

OCCASIONAL SERMONS.

THE SUBJECT AND TEMPER OF THE GOSPEL-MINISTRY:

A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH,

ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER, 19, 1779.

WHEN THE AUTHOR ENTERED ON HIS FIRST PUBLIC SERVICE IN THAT CHURCH.

———*Speaking the truth in love.*—Ephesians, iv. 15.

THE words in the original have a more comprehensive sense than in our version, Αληθευοντες εν αγαπη. They extend no less to conduct than to speech, and comprise, in one short sentence, that combination of integrity and benevolence, which constitute the character of a true christian. But, as our morning service has been already much prolonged, I mean not to enlarge at present upon this important subject. I propose my text rather as a kind of motto, to introduce a brief account of the feelings, desires, and purposes of my heart, on this my first appearance before you. The inhabitants of these parishes, to whom I more immediately address myself, have a right to be informed, now the providence of God has placed me in this city, and in this church, of the views with which I have undertaken the important trust lately committed to me, and of the manner and spirit in which it is my desire to discharge it. If these inquiries be upon any of your minds, accept my answer in the words I have read: I came, and, by the grace of God, I hope to abide amongst you, "speaking the truth in love."

I should be utterly unworthy your attention, I should deserve your contempt and detestation, if, under the solemn character of a minister of Jesus Christ, and with a professed regard for his service and the good of souls, I should presume to speak any thing amongst you, but what I verily believe in my conscience to be the truth. The apostles were ambassadors for Christ, (2 Cor. v. 24,) and we, however inferior in other respects, are so far concerned in this part of their character, as to be equally bound to conform to the instructions of our Lord and Master. The Bible is the grand repository of the truths which it will be the business and the pleasure of my life to set before you. It is the complete system of divine truth, to which nothing can be added, and from which nothing can be taken, (Rev. xxii. 18, 19,) with impunity. Every attempt to disguise, or soften any branch of this truth, in order to accommodate it to the prevailing taste around us, either to avoid the displeasure, or to court the favour of our fellow-mortals, must be an affront to the majesty of God, and an act of treachery to men. My conscience bears me witness, that I mean to speak the truth among you. May the grace of God enable me always to do it. The principal branches of the truth as it is in Jesus, according to St. Paul's expression, are summarily contained in the Articles, which I have just now read and given my solemn assent to in your hearing. These I acknowledge and adopt as a standard of sound doctrine, not merely because they are the Articles of our Church, but because, upon mature and repeated examination, I am persuaded they are agreeable to the scriptures. I am to enlarge on the declaration of the scripture and of the Articles concerning the depravity of fallen man, the evil of sin, the method of salvation by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. I am to bear testimony to the dignity and excellency of the Redeemer's person and characters, the suitableness of his offices, the efficacy of his blood, and obedience to death on the behalf of sinners, and his glory as Head of the Church, and Lord of heaven and earth. I am to set before you the characters, obligations, and privileges of those who believe in his

name; and to prove that the doctrines of the grace of God are doctrines according to godliness, which, though they may be abused by men of corrupt minds, have in themselves, when rightly understood, a direct and powerful tendency to enforce universal obedience to the commands of God, and to promote the peace and welfare of civil society. I am likewise to warn all who hear me, of the sin and danger of rejecting the great salvation revealed by the gospel. These will be the subjects of my ministry; and if what I shall offer upon these heads be agreeable, not only to the Articles which I have subscribed, but to the scriptures, which we all profess to believe, it must of course be admitted that I shall speak the truth.

But the cause of truth itself may be discredited by improper management; and therefore the scripture, which furnishes us with subject-matter of our ministry, and teaches us what we are to say, is equally explicit as to the temper and spirit in which we are to speak. Though I had the knowledge of all mysteries, (1 Cor. xiii. 1,) and the tongue of an angel to declare them, I could hope for little acceptance or usefulness, unless I was to speak in love. The gospel is a declaration of the astonishing love of God to mankind; it exhibits the perfect exemplar of love in the character of him, who, when upon earth in the form of a servant, went about doing good, (Acts x. 38,) and exerted the most unbounded benevolence to all around him. The servant of the Lord, of that meek and merciful Saviour, who wept over his avowed enemies, and prayed for his actual murderers while nailing him to the cross, learns at his Saviour's feet to bear a cordial love to all mankind. Man, considered as the creature of God, is the noblest and most important of his works in the visible creation, formed by him who originally made him for himself, with such a vastness of desire, such a capacity for happiness, as nothing less than an infinite good can satisfy; formed to exist in an eternal unchangeable state. And even fallen man, though depraved and perverted, guilty, and, in his present state, obnoxious to eternal misery, is yet capable of being restored to the favour of God, and renewed into his image, of serving him here, and being happy with him for ever. Whoever therefore has tasted of the love of Christ, and has known by his own experience the need and the worth of redemption, is enabled, yea, he is constrained to love his fellow-creatures. He loves them at first sight: and, if the providence of God commits a dispensation of the gospel and a care of souls to him, he will feel the warmest emotions of friendship and tenderness, while he beseeches them by the tender mercies of God, (Rom. xii. 1,) and even while he warns them by his terrors, 2 Cor. v. 11. Surely I durst not address you from this place, if I could not with sincerity at least, if not with equal warmth, adopt the apostle's words, and say, "Being affectionately desirous of you, we are willing to impart unto you, not the gospel of God only, but our own souls also (were it possible,) because ye were dear unto us," 1 Thess. ii. 8.

This love which my heart bears, I offer as a plea for that earnestness and importunity which I must use. I came not to amuse you with subjects of opinion or uncertainty, or even with truths of a cold, speculative, uninteresting nature, which you might receive without benefit, or reject without detriment; but to speak the truths of God, truths of the utmost importance to the welfare of your souls in time and in eternity. If I love you, therefore, I cannot be content with delivering my message; my spirit must, and will be deeply engaged for its success. I cannot be content with the emoluments annexed to my office—I seek not yours, but you, (2 Cor. xii. 14;) that you may know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, (Ephes. iii. 19;) that you may be delivered from the power of this evil world, (Gal. i. 4,) and that I and you may at length stand accepted before the throne of God; in a word, that by a blessing from on high, accompanying my poor labours, I may both save myself, and them that hear me, 1 Tim. iv. 16. These are the aims and ends which I hope always to have in view, and therefore love will prompt me to be faithful and earnest.

Too often the due reception of the truth is greatly impeded by the cares, the business, or the amusements of the world. We find many of our hearers, alas! too happy, or too much engrossed, to afford us that attention we have a right to claim, considering the weight of our message, and the authority under which we speak. But God, in mercy to the souls of men, frequently suits the appointments of his providence, in subserviency to the purposes of his grace. He prepares for them what they do not desire for themselves, seasons for leisure, retirement, and reflection. This is one gracious design of the various afflictions of human life. When he visits with sickness or pain, crosses and disappointments—when our cisterns are broken, and our gourds wither—when the desire of our eyes is taken away with a stroke, (Ezek. xxiv. 16,) or we meet with a thorn or sting, where our fond hearts were expecting only pleasure—then perhaps the truths which were heard with too much indifference in the hour of prosperity, may be more regarded. My love will prompt me to be always near you, waiting for such seasons, and ready upon the first intimation (for I mean not to intrude myself,) to offer my sympathy, my prayers, my best advice. Though I shall have but little time for visits of mere ceremony; to visit you as a minister, and to assist you to the

utmost of my power in making a right improvement of the providences of God, is a service which I shall always owe you from a principle of duty, and which I hope always to be glad to render from a principle of love.

If the grace of God, without which I can do nothing, should thus enable me to speak the truth in love, may I not hope for your favourable attention? Would it not imply an unjust reflection upon your candour, to suppose that any of you will be angry with one who only wishes to speak the truth in love? Certainly I can as yet have no particular reason to expect an unkind return from any individual among you, because I am a stranger to you all. But the scripture teaches, what experience and observation abundantly confirm, that the doctrines of divine truth are so mysterious in themselves, and so opposite and mortifying to the opinion mortals are prone to entertain of their own wisdom and goodness, that persons of very amiable characters in common life, are too often amongst the warmest opposers of the ministers who dare faithfully and plainly persevere in speaking the truth. Should I have this trial to meet with from any of you, still I hope to speak the truth in love, and to remember that I am a follower of him who only returned kindness for hard usage. I hope to consider, that if any oppose, it is because they know not what they do; and to bear in mind, that I myself was once a scorner and despiser of the gospel which I now preach; that I stand here as a pattern of the long suffering of God; and that having obtained mercy myself, I have encouragement, from my own case, to hope that the strongest prejudices may be softened by the power of his grace.

Let me close with one observation. The transactions of this day, and the consequence of it will not be soon forgotten. They will be registered in the annals of eternity. As surely as we are now met together, so surely we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, 2 Cor. x. 10. Then I must give an account of my ministry, and you of the manner in which you received it. If I speak the truth—it is at the peril of my hearers to treat it with contempt, or even with neglect. But I would hope better things, even that the Lord, the Holy Spirit, will prepare our hearts to receive with meekness that engrafted word, which is able to save our souls, James i. 11.

I only add my earnest request for a frequent and fervent remembrance in your prayers, that the Father of mercies, the God of all wisdom, may so influence my spirit, that no part of my conduct may be unsuitable to what I have at this time professed. That speaking the truth in love, and commending it by a conversation becoming the gospel, (Phil. i. 17,) my labours and my life may be acceptable and serviceable among you. I trust that I, on my part, shall not cease to pray, that his blessing may rest upon you, upon your persons, your families, and upon all your concerns; and more especially for the welfare and comfort of your souls—that he may guide you by his counsel through this life, and afterwards receive you to his glory, Psalm lxxiii. 24.

THE GUILT AND DANGER OF SUCH A NATION AS THIS,

A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH,

ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 1781.

THE DAY APPOINTED FOR A GENERAL FAST.

Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord? And shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?—Jeremiah v. 29.

THREE times (Jer. v. 9; ix. 9,) the Lord God repeats by his prophet this alarming question. Their ingratitude and obstinacy were so notorious, their sins so enormous and aggravated, the sentence denounced against them, however severe, was so undeniably just, that partial as they were to themselves, God is pleased to appeal to their own consciences, and to make them judges in their own cause; inviting or rather challenging them to offer any plea, why his forbearance and patience, which they had so long despised, should be still afforded them.

But the form of the question will not permit us to confine the application to Israel or Judah. The words are not, "On this nation" particularly, but "On such a nation as this." The Lord, the Governor of the earth, has provided in the history of one nation, a lesson of instruction and warning to every nation under the sun; and the nearer the state and spirit of any people resemble the state and character of Judah, when Jeremiah prophesied among them, the more reason they have to tremble under the apprehension of the same or similar judgments.

God brought Israel out of Egypt with an outstretched arm, divided the Red Sea before them, led them into the wilderness by a cloud and pillar of fire, fed them with manna, and gave them water from the rock. He planted them in a good land, and though they often sinned and were often punished, they were distinguished by many tokens of his presence and effects of his goodness, above any other nation. In the time of Solomon they possessed the height of human prosperity, but they soon rebelled and involved themselves in increasing troubles. And, though the efforts and examples of Hezekiah and Josiah produced a temporary reformation, and procured a temporary respite, they went on, upon the whole, from bad to worse, till the measure of their iniquity being filled up, and the season of God's long suffering at an end, he directed the march of Nebuchadnezzar against them, who, because he was the appointed instrument of divine vengeance, could not fail of success. The temple and city of Jerusalem were burnt, the land desolated, the greater part of the inhabitants destroyed, and the survivors led captives into a far distant land.

We likewise are a highly favoured people, and have long enjoyed privileges which excite the admiration and envy of surrounding nations; and we are a sinful, ungrateful people; so that when we compare the blessings and mercies we have received from the Lord, with our conduct towards him, it is to be feared we are no less concerned with the question in my text than Israel was of old. This is the point I propose to illustrate, as suitable to the design for which we are at this time professedly assembled.

Though the occasion will require me to take some notice of our public affairs, I mean not to amuse you with what is usually called a political discourse. The Bible is my system of politics. There I read, that the Lord reigns; (Psal. xcvii. 1;) that he doeth what he pleaseth in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; (Dan. iv. 35;) that no wisdom, understanding, counsel, or power, can prevail without his blessing; (Prov. xi. 30;) that as righteousness exalteth a nation, so sin is the reproach, and will even totally be the ruin of any people, Prov. xiv. 34. From these and other maxims of a like import, I am learning to be still, and to know

that he is God. My part, as a minister of the gospel of peace, is not to inflame, but, if possible, to soothe and sweeten the spirits of my hearers; to withdraw their attention from the instrumental and apparent causes of the calamities we feel or fear, and to fix it upon sin, as the original and proper cause of every other evil. As a peaceful and a loyal subject, I profess and inculcate obedience to the laws of my country, to which I conceive myself bound by the authority of God's command, and by gratitude for the civil and religious liberty I possess. For the rest, political disquisitions, except immediately connected with scriptural principles, appear to me improper for the pulpit at all times, and more especially unseasonable and indecent on a day of public humiliation. I hope we are now met, not to accuse others, but to confess our own sins—not to justify ourselves, but to plead for mercy.

May it please God, therefore, by the influence of his Holy Spirit, to impress the consciences of all present, and to make us attentive to our own immediate concerns, while I endeavour,

I. Briefly to delineate the state of the nation; or to show you what a nation this is.

II. To consider in what manner the righteous Judge and Governor of the earth might justly avenge himself of such a nation as this.

III. To inquire, whether there be any hope that such a nation as this, can yet escape the impending ruin with which it is threatened? and if there be, in what way this mercy is to be sought and expected?

I. In order to estimate the state of the nation, we must attend to two views, which, when contrasted, illustrate each other, and in their combination constitute our national character, and discriminate it, not only from that of every nation around us, but from all the kingdoms recorded in the history of past ages, —I mean our national privileges, and our national sins.

With regard to the first head,—the peculiar privileges which, by the favour of Divine Providence, we have enjoyed as a people, I must be brief. A full detail of them would require a volume. Though the island of Great Britain exhibits but a small spot upon a map of the globe, it makes a splendid appearance in the history of mankind, and has for a long space of time been signally under the protection of God, and the seat of peace, liberty, and truth. When Christendom had groaned for ages under the night of Papal superstition, the first light of Reformation dawned amongst us by the preaching and writings of Wickliff. From that time we have possessed the knowledge of the gospel, and God has had a succession of witnesses in our land; they have been at different periods exposed to suffering, and many of them were called to seal their testimony with their blood, but they could neither be intimidated nor extirpated. In Luther's time, when the pillars of Popery were more publicly and generally shaken, we were among the first who were animated and enabled to shake off the yoke of Rome; and God has often since remarkably interposed to preserve us from being brought into that bondage a second time. The spirit of persecution, under various forms, has again and again attempted to resume its power, but has been as often restrained and defeated. Civil commotions likewise stand upon record in our annals, and our forefathers have felt miseries of which we can form but a very imperfect idea. But they suffered and struggled for us. The event of every contest and revolution contributed gradually to establish that happy basis of government which we call *The British Constitution;* and together with these advances in favour of liberty, an increase of commerce, wealth, and dominion, has been afforded us. From that distinguished æra, the Revolution, and more especially since the accession of the present Royal Family, we have enjoyed such an uninterrupted series of peace and prosperity, as cannot be paralleled in the history of any nation we have heard of, not excepting even that of Israel. I call our peace uninterrupted; for the efforts of rebellion in the reigns of our two last kings, were so speedily crushed, and were productive of so few calamities, except to the unhappy aggressors, that they are chiefly to be noticed as instances of the goodness of the Lord, who, notwithstanding we were then a sinful people, was pleased to fight our battles, and put our enemies to shame. I call it uninterrupted, for though we have been engaged as principals in several foreign wars, and the storm fell with dreadful weight upon other countries, we at home knew little of the war but from the public prints, which usually, after the first or second year were filled with accounts of the successes and victories which the Lord of hosts (alas, by how few was he acknowledged!) gave to our fleets and armies.— When the last war terminated, we were at the height of national honour and power. Our arms were victorious, and our flags triumphant wherever our operations had been directed in the most distant and opposite parts of the globe. What an accession of empire and riches did we then acquire, while we were sitting (if I may so speak) under our vines and fig-trees undisturbed: and while a considerable part of Germany, rather involved, than properly interested in our disputes, was almost desolated by fire and sword! And notwithstanding our increasing provocations, every succeeding year has afforded signal proofs, that though the Lord is displeased with us, he has not yet forsaken us. If in some instances he has justly disappointed our expectations, he has in others appeared no

less remarkably in our favour, defeating the designs of our enemies, protecting our commerce, and affording us in general more plentiful harvests at home, since the war has rendered supplies from abroad more precarious and difficult. Add to our internal peace, wealth and plenty, the inviolable immunity both of persons and property, in which we are preserved by the spirit and administration of our laws; and that unrestrained liberty which people of all sentiments and denominations possess and exercise, of worshipping God in the way they think most agreeable to his will. Must not a due consideration of these things constrain us to say, He hath not dealt so with any nation!

What could the Lord have done more for his vineyard! Isa. v. 4. How could he have laid a people under stronger obligations to his service! What returns might he not expect from such a nation as this! But alas! we have requited him evil for good! Such a nation as this is very imperfectly described by an enumeration of privileges. I have a more painful task now to attend to; I should enumerate (were it possible) our national sins. It is but a sketch I can offer upon this immense and awful subject. But enough is obvious, and at hand, to make us tremble, if we regard the scripture, and do in our hearts believe that there is a God that governs the earth, (Psal. lviii. 11.) I wish you to keep in mind, as I proceed, the slight view I have given of the favours God has bestowed upon us. The recollection of his mercies is necessary to give a proper sense of the colouring and aggravation of our sins. It is often pleaded, that, sinful as we are, we are not more depraved in morals and practice than the inhabitants of France or Italy, or the other nations of Europe. I much question the truth of this plea. I am afraid that, in some instances at least, we are more corrupt and profligate than any nation now existing. But admitting that France or Italy equal, or even exceed us in open and positive wickedness, if they fall short of us in advantages for knowing the will of God, if they are not equally enriched by the bounties of his providence, if he has not so signally appeared on their behalf as he has on ours, their sins, however enormous or numerous, are not attended with equal aggravations; we must fix upon a nation (if such could be found) that is upon a par with us in the blessings of gospel-light, of civil and religious liberty, before we can properly form a comparison, or have any just reason for supposing that our sins are not greater than theirs.

The magnitude of our national debt is a frequent topic of conversation. We have indeed but an indistinct idea of a number not very far short of two hundred millions, yet we can form some conception of it. But our national debt of sin is beyond all the rules and powers of arithmetical computation. The holiness, authority, and goodness of God (which are infinite) afford the only proper measures by which to judge of the horrid evil of the sins committed against him.

The sin of a nation is properly the aggregate or sum-total of all the sins committed by every individual residing in that nation. But those may be emphatically called national sins which, by their notoriety, frequency, or circumstances, contribute to mark the character of one nation, as distinct from another. It is to be hoped that some species of sins amongst us have not yet become national. They are rather exotics, not perfectly familiarized to the soil, or prevalent in every part of the land. I shall confine myself to a few of the particulars which are more directly characteristic of this nation, and at this time.

1. The maxims and usage generally prevalent among a people, if contrary to the rule of God's word, are national sins. If customary, they are national; if inconsistent with the precepts of scripture, they must be sinful. A woe is denounced (Isa. v. 20,) against those who call evil good, and good evil; but this dreadful abuse of language, sentiment, and conduct, can only be avoided by making the inspired writings the standard of our judgment. In a land that bears the name of Christian, adultery is deemed gallantry; murder, in some cases, is a point of honour; avarice is prudence; profuseness wears the mask of generosity; and dissipation is considered as innocent amusement. On the other hand, meekness is accounted meanness of spirit, and grace is branded with the opprobrious names of melancholy and enthusiasm. Habituated from our infancy to the effects of these prepossessions, and more or less under their influence, very few of us are duly sensible how utterly repugnant the spirit and temper of the world around us is to the genius and spirit of the christianity we profess. It would, I think, appear in a much more striking light to an intelligent and unbiassed observer, who, upon hearing that Great Britain was favoured with the knowledge of the true religion, should visit us from some very remote country with a view of sharing in our advantage. If I could make the tour of the kingdom with such a stranger, and show him what is transacting in the busy and in the gay world, in city, court, and country; if I could describe to him the persons he would see at our theatres and public places, at Newmarket, at contested elections, and explain the motives and aims which bring them together; if I could introduce him into the families of the great, the reputed wise, and the wealthy,—from these data, together with the ignorance and licentiousness of the populace, which must unavoidably engage his notice wherever he went, I apprehend he would not be long at a loss to form a tolerable judgment of our na-

tional character. And if after this survey, he were attentively to read the New Testament, I think he must allow, that, admitting it was a revelation from God, our national character was neither more nor less than the union and combination of our national sins. He could not but perceive, that infidelity, pride, sensuality, greediness of gain, strangely coupled with thoughtless profusion, contempt of God, and a daring opposition to his will, constitute the leading features of our portrait as a nation.

2. If there be sins, which, though not expressly enjoined, are authorized, and to people who regard man more than God, rendered in a manner necessary by the sanction of the egislature, these, and especially in a free country, may be deemed national sins. Here I feel myself embarrassed. As a private member of society, full of respect and reverence for the authority to which, by the providence and will of God, I owe a willing and thankful subjection, I could wish to be entirely silent. But I likewise bear another character. As a minister of the gospel, I stand here before a higher Master. In his service I am commanded to be bold and faithful, and I dare not, in conscience, especially at such a time and on such an occasion as this, wholly suppress my sentiments. But I wish to speak with all the tenderness and delicacy the subject will admit.

In this land of liberty the measures of government and of parliament are canvassed with great freedom, often indeed with a very offensive intemperance and indecency. It is, however, one important privilege of our happy constitution, that British subjects have a right of presenting respectful petitions either to the throne or to the senate, when such measures are in contemplation as are apprehended may prove detrimental to the interests of the nation or of individuals: a right, which, upon the ground of real or pretended grievances, has been abundantly exercised of late years. But it is long since the honour of God and the interests of true religion have been the objects of an address or petition from any corporate body in the kingdom. This indifference of all parties to the cause of God, when all are so attentive and feeling in cases where they think their own temporal concerns affected, warrants one to consider the acts of the legislature, while no alteration is desired by those on whom they are binding, as the acts of the whole nation. Even the edicts of an arbitrary prince, whose will supplies the place of law, might involve a nation in guilt, if he enjoined what was contrary to the commands of God, and they through fear obeyed him. Much more then may laws, made by the representatives of a free people, be considered as acts of the community, if they excite no constitutional endeavour for relief.

I am far from supposing that any of our laws now in force were formed with an intention of promoting sin. But some of them, through the prevailing depravation of morals amongst us, do it eventually. For instance, the Test and Corporation acts, which require every person who has a post under government, or a commission in the army or navy, to qualify himself for his office by receiving the sacrament of the Lord's supper, would occasion no sin, if men were generally influenced by the fear of God, or even by a principle of integrity. They would then rather decline places of honour or profit, than accept them upon such terms, if they were conscious that their sentiments or conduct were repugnant to the design of that institution. But as the case stands at present, while gain is preferred to godliness, and the love of distinction or lucre is stronger than the dictates of conscience, we frequently see professed infidels and notorious libertines approach the Lord's table as a matter of course, and prostituting the most solemn ordinance of christianity to their ambition or interest. The great number and variety of appointments civil and military, which cannot be legally possessed without this qualification, render the enormity almost as common as it is heinous. If the Lord be a God of knowledge, he cannot be deceived. If he be a God of truth and holiness, he will not be mocked. I am afraid we have been long guilty of a contemptuous profanation of the body and blood of Christ.

The multiplicity of oaths, which are interwoven into almost every branch of public business, involves thousands in the habitual guilt of perjury, which perhaps may eminently be styled our national sin. Many of them it is true, do not necessarily lead to sin, because honest and conscientious men may, and do strictly observe them; but it is to be feared, the greater number deliberately and customarily violate these solemn obligations, and take them as often as imposed, without hesitation, and without any design of complying with them. Not a few of these oaths are either so worded or so circumstanced, that it is morally impossible to fulfil them; and if a person was even to attempt it, he would be thought a busy-body or a fool. Yet they must be tendered, and must be taken as a matter of form, when nothing more is expected or purposed on either side. The number of church-wardens and constables who are yearly sworn, is very great; and as these offices are chiefly held by rotation, in the course of a few years, they take in a considerable part of the middling people in the kingdom. How many or how few of them act up to the letter and the spirit of the oaths they have taken, will be known in the day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed. But it is now evident, that, while some, like sheep, tread without thought in

the path of custom, content to forswear themselves because others have done so before them; and while some are hardy enough to trifle with God and man for profit, the laws which enjoin and multiply oaths do thereby furnish and multiply temptations to the sin of perjury. To this source we may ascribe much of that profligacy and contempt of religion, which we now are called to mourn over. The frequency of oaths, the irreverent manner in which they are administered, and the impunity with which they are broken, have greatly contributed to weaken the sense of every moral obligation, and to spread a dissolute and daring spirit through the land.

Where the laws have expressly interposed to enforce the commands of God, if they are suffered by general consent to lie dormant, and are not carried into execution, the enormities which flow from such connivance, come under the denomination of national sins. The profanation of the Lord's day, drunkenness, profane swearing, are contrary, not only to the precepts of scripture, but to the laws of the land; and yet they could hardly be more prevalent though there were no statutes in force against them. As these evils are not apparently detrimental to the revenue or to commerce, they are seldom taken notice of, except when connected with some act of trespass or injury to individuals. Very few magistrates are concerned to enforce the observation of these laws; and if private persons sometimes attempt it by information, they meet but little success, they obtain but little thanks. The arts of pleading, the minutiæ and niceties of forms are employed to entangle and discourage them, and to screen offenders. Their endeavours are usually treated as officious and impertinent, and they are stigmatized with the invidious name of *informers*. In their own cause they are allowed to be active; but a man must have a good share of resolution, or rather of divine grace, who can withstand the reproach and scorn he will bring upon himself, if he dare to be active in the cause of God.

My subject, alas! is almost boundless! But our time prescribes limits to my discourse. I must, however, hint my apprehension, that acts of oppression and violence, in some parts (at least) of our widely-extended settlements, have contributed to enhance and aggravate our national sin. If the welfare and the lives of thousands have been sacrificed to the interest of the few; if the ravages of cruelty and avarice, though notorious and undeniable, have met with no public censure or punishment, may we not expect that God himself will avenge the oppressed, and plead their cause, not only against their actual oppressors, but against the community that refused to hear their cries and redress their wrongs?

I am pained likewise to observe how little the calamities of war and the shedding of blood are laid to heart. War, when most necessary and unavoidable, is a dreadful evil; one of the most severe scourges with which the great God visits a sinful world. But, because we, through his mercy, know no more of it at home than by what we hear of the sufferings of others; to their sufferings, if we account them enemies, the hearts of many are unfeeling as a stone. They contemplate with composure and apparent satisfaction, not only the horrors of a field of battle, but the devastations, flames, rapes, and murders, which too often mark the progress of conquest, or the retreat of disappointed rage. May the Lord God keep such miseries far from us! May we never have to say, As we have heard, so we have seen. But there is a temper and spirit too prevalent among us, which calls for humiliation—a thirst of revenge, an eagerness for war, as affording opportunity for pillage and plunder, and an indifference to the distresses of our fellow-creatures, more answerable to the idea we form of the savages in America, than to that of a civilized and christian people.

If we consider the nation with a more particular respect to the profession of religion amongst us, the prospect is equally dark. Though the Articles and Liturgy, which are still retained as a public standard, express the doctrines and spirit of the Reformation, the truths upon which they are founded are sunk into disrepute. They are heard from few pulpits, they are to be met with in few books of modern divinity. The ministers who have courage to preach agreeably to their required subscriptions are discountenanced and slighted, if not openly opposed. In a word, the gospel of Christ, the truth as it is in Jesus, is little known amongst us, and where it is published, is rejected by a great majority of every rank. Yet, by the mercy of God, it has been considerably revived and spread amongst us of late years, and (I hope) is still spreading. There is a remnant amongst us who sigh and mourn for the abominations of the times, and have an humble and awful sense of the judgments of God declared against sin. They see black clouds gathering apace around us, and their hearts tremble at the apprehension of what he may justly inflict upon such a nation as this. But even among the people of different denominations who profess the truth, there is much to be lamented. Alas! what sinful conformity to the world! what coldness and indifference where we ought to be warm, and what unchristian heat and fierceness in enforcing or exploding lesser differences in sentiment or in modes of worship! May we not fear, lest, for the abatement of christian love, the violence of party spirit, and the abuse of religious liberty, the Lord should visit his professing people with a rod, even though he

were still to exercise patience towards the nation at large?

Let us then, having premised this brief, but awful delineation of our present state, proceed to consider,

II. What we have just reason to expect, if the Lord should speak to us in his displeasure, and avenge himself of such a nation as this! Two obvious topics offer themselves to assist our inquiries.

1. What we learn from scripture, and from general history, of God's usual methods in the government of the world. He avenged himself on the old world, by a deluge; on Sodom and Gomorrah, by fire from heaven. Where are now the mighty empires which once extended over a great part of the earth! The Assyrian, Persian, Macedonian, and Roman governments, arose and perished in succession. What were Cyrus, Alexander, and other conquerors, whose victories decided the fate of nations, but instruments of divine vengeance? The sins of the people against whom they went, and a secret commission from the Lord of hosts, directed their march, and insured their success. He has appointed a day when he will judge the world in righteousness, but the award of that final tribunal will be personal to each one according to his works. Communities, as such, in their collective capacity, are visited and judged in the present life. And in this respect, the scripture considers nations as individuals: each having an infancy, growth, maturity, and declension. Every succeeding generation accumulates the stock of national sin, and there is a measure of iniquity which determines the period of kingdoms. Till this measure is filled up, the patience of God waits for them, but then patience gives way to vengeance.

Such has been his uniform procedure from the earliest times, of which either sacred or profane history affords us any information: and undoubtedly a day will come when the prosperity of this nation will cease. May it be at a yet very distant period! But there are alarming symptoms of decay already visible upon us. When God is exceedingly displeased with a people, it is not necessary, in order to their punishment, that he should bury them alive by an earthquake, or destroy them by lightning. If he only leave them to themselves, withdraw his blessing from their counsels, and his restraint from their passions, their ruin follows of course; according to the necessary order and connection of causes and effects. The destruction of Jerusalem affords a striking proof and illustration of this remark. Our Saviour foretold, that the calamities of that siege would be greater and more aggravated than had ever been known from the creation; and infidels must confess, that the relation of Josephus, who was an eye-witness of that catastrophe, exhibits such scenes of distress as cannot be paralleled in any other history. Yet the Roman armies, which were led on by an invisible hand to accomplish the prediction, were not headed by a Nero, or a Caligula, whose savage disposition and thirst of blood might have prompted them to unrelenting slaughter; but by Titus, who, for his singular moderation and clemency, obtained the title of *Deliciæ humani generis*, the friend and delight of mankind. He desired not their destruction; he entreated them to have pity on themselves; but in vain: they were judicially infatuated, and devoted to ruin. If God gives up a people to the way of their own hearts, they will, they must perish. When a general corruption of morals takes place, when private interest extinguishes all sense of public virtue, when a profligate and venal spirit has infected every rank and order of the state, when presumptuous security and dissipation increase in proportion as danger approaches; when, after repeated disappointments, contempt of God, and vain confidence in imagined resources of their own, grow bolder and stronger,—then there is reason to fear, that the sentence is already gone forth, and that the execution of it is at hand.

2. The progress of our public affairs for some years past, too evidently confirms these general principles, brings the application home to ourselves, and loudly warns us what we are yet to expect, if we persist in hardening ourselves against the Lord. How rapid the change we have seen! From what small beginnings to what extensive consequences! The cloud which now overspreads the heavens with blackness, was not long since no larger than a man's hand. I suppose none who were actively concerned in our public commotions during their early stage, had the least apprehension that things would have proceeded to such calamitous and diffusive extremities. But sin abounded, and the Lord was displeased. Thus we may easily account for every mistake and miscarriage, for the first rise, and the long continuance of the war. The connection between us and the Americans was too nearly founded in relation, too closely cemented by mutual interest, to be so suddenly broken, if their sins and ours had not concurred in operation to bring distress both upon them and us. After a great expense of treasure and blood, instead of the re-union we hoped for, we have been successively involved in war with France, Spain, and Holland. And it is possible that every power in Europe, either is, or soon will be, openly or secretly against us. Nor can I omit, upon this occasion, the unprecedented violence of the late dreadful hurricanes in the West Indies. Though infidels and petty reasoners will doubtless labour to persuade themselves that they proceeded merely from natural causes, christians, I trust, will acknowledge the voice of

God speaking, and speaking to us out of the whirlwind. It is true, he spoke by them to our enemies likewise, for they likewise are sinners. May both they and we be humbled before him, and learn, that as sin instigates and arms us to destroy each other, so when he is pleased to take the work into his own hands, he can strike such a blow, as shall for the time suspend our feeble hostilities, and by involving us in a common calamity, make us, notwithstanding our enmity, the objects of mutual commiseration. "The Lord's hand is lifted up," Isa. xxvi. 11. This part of an ancient prophecy is fulfilled in our view: the next clause, "They will not see," is, alas! fulfilled likewise, by the amazing insensibility and infatuation which still prevails among us. It follows, "But they shall see." What still greater evils may overtake us, before this clause also is accomplished to the glory of God, and our due humiliation, who can say! Alas! who that loves his country, but must tremble at the prospects of the judgments yet impending over us, if he should still proceed to plead his own cause, till he is fully avenged on such a nation as this!—To relieve my thoughts, I gladly hasten to inquire,

III. Whether there be any hope that such a nation as this may yet escape deserved ruin; and if there be, in what way this mercy is to be sought, and expected! I confess I have little hopes of it, but upon one or other of the following suppositions.

1. If the Lord be graciously pleased to succeed the professed design of this day's service, and to put forth that power which accompanied his message by Jonah to Nineveh, so that a general spirit of repentance and humiliation may spread throughout the land—If he bow the hearts of both rulers and people, to confess and forsake those sins which have awakened his displeasure—If the laws which concern his honour, will, and worship, be speedily and impartially enforced; and profaneness and immorality discountenanced and suppressed—If, instead of trusting in fleets and armies, we acknowledge the Lord of hosts, and look up to him for a blessing—If men fearing God and hating covetousness, (Exodus xviii. 21,) are raised up to assist in our councils, and to stand forth in their country's cause; men who will rely on his guidance and protection, and disdain the little arts and intrigues on which alone short-sighted politicians depend for the success of their measures—should I live to see such a happy internal change, I should hope, that notwithstanding our great provocations, the Lord, whose mercies are infinite, would be yet entreated for us; that he would turn from the fierceness of his anger, maintain our tranquillity at home, and, by his wisdom and his influence over the hearts of men, put an honourable and satisfactory end to the unhappy war in which we are engaged.

2. However the bulk of the nation may determine, if the remnant who know his name, and have tasted of his love, should be deeply impressed with a concern for his glory, and forsaking their little animosities and party-interests, should unite in application to the throne of grace, and be found in those duties and practices which their profession of the gospel, and the state of things around them require, there is yet hope. For the prayers of God's people have a powerful efficacy. The holy and benevolent importunity of Abraham would have prevailed in favour even of Sodom, if ten righteous persons had been found in it, Gen. xviii. When Sennacherib invaded Judea, had overrun the greatest part of the country, and thought Jerusalem would be an easy conquest, Hezekiah, though he took such precautions as prudence suggested, did not defeat him by arms, (Isa. xxxvii.) but by prayer. In the prayers of true believers is our best visible resource. These are the chariots and horsemen of Israel. United prayer, humiliation of heart, a mourning for sin in secret, and a faithful testimony against it in public, will more essentially contribute to the safety and welfare of the nation, than all our military preparations without them. We boast of our navy, and it has often proved, by the blessing of God, our bulwark; but how easily can he who walketh upon the wings of the wind, dash the best appointed fleet to pieces against the rocks, or sink it like lead in the mighty waters! We boast of our troops; but he can easily cut them off with sickness, give them up to a spirit of discord, or impress them with a sudden terror, so that the stoutest heart shall tremble, and the mighty warriors turn pale and drop their weapons! A thousand unforeseen events and contingencies are always at his disposal, to blast and disappoint the best concerted enterprises; for that the race is not necessarily sure to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, is not only asserted in the scripture, but confirmed by the experience and observation of all ages, Psalm xxxiii. 16, 17; Ecclesiastes ix. 11. But his people are precious in his sight, and their prayers he will hear. Unknown and unnoticed as they are in the world, he highly values them. He has redeemed them by his blood. He inhabits them by his Spirit. He has prepared heaven for them, and the earth itself is continued for their sakes, and shall be destroyed when they are all removed from it. They are the light, the salt, the strength, and the safety of the nations among which they are dispersed, Matt. v. 13, 14. Except the Lord of hosts had left a small remnant of these among us, we should long ago have been as Sodom, and made like unto Gomorrah, Isa. i.

9. To his attention to their prayers and concerns, I doubt not the preservation of this city at the time of the late horrible riots may be ascribed. I wish I could now recal to your minds the emotions which some of you then felt, when your countenances bore a strong impression of your inward anxiety. Those terrors came upon you unexpectedly, and though they are forgotten by too many, scenes equally distressing may present themselves before you are aware. O may he in mercy animate this remnant, now to stand in the breach as one man, and to wrestle for a sinful land! Then we may at least arise to the hope of the Ninevites, Who can tell but the Lord may turn from his fierce anger, that we perish not? Jonah, iii. 9.

Let me now close with an address,

1. To such of you in this assembly as fear the Lord. A part of you are poor and afflicted people, and by your obscure situation in life, are precluded from a very distinct knowledge of the causes, the present effects, and possible consequences of the war. You live in a happy ignorance of what passes in the world, and take no part in the disputes which, in many places, ensnare and embitter the spirits even of professors of the gospel. Your principles inspire you with sentiments of duty to government, with the love of peace, and with a just sense of the value of your privileges, civil and religious. But though you are poor, and can serve your country in no other way, you may serve it effectually by your prayers. You have access to the throne of grace. Intercede therefore for a land that lieth in wickedness, be concerned for the honour of his name, for the blindness and misery around you. It may be the Lord will be entreated of you, and for your sakes, and for the sake of such as you, command the destroying angel to stay his hand.

Those of you who have better opportunity of knowing the state of our public affairs, have likewise a more extensive sphere of service. You will, I hope, improve your influence in your families and connections, and by your advice and example, endeavour to awaken all with whom you converse to join in promoting the design of this day's service. I call upon all who have ears to hear, and eyes to see the voice and the hand of the Lord, the rich and the poor, the young and the aged, to be faithful, circumspect, and zealous in your several stations.

Should wrath be decreed, and there be no remedy, at least you shall prevail for yourselves. You shall know that the Lord whom you serve is a strong-hold in the day of trouble, and is mindful of them who put their trust in him. You can hardly be too much alarmed for the nation, but for yourselves you have no just cause of fear. We are commissioned to say to the righteous, It shall be well with him, Isa. iii. 10. The Saviour, to whom you have fled for refuge has all power in heaven and earth. He will keep you as the apple of his eye, and hide you under the shadow of his wings. He can screen you from evil, though thousands and ten thousands should suffer and fall around you. Or if he appoints you a share in suffering, he will be with you to support and comfort you, and to sanctify all your troubles. His word to you is, When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, see that ye be not troubled, Matthew xxiv. 6. Fear not them who, at the most, can but kill the body. The light of his countenance is sufficient to cheer you in the darkest hour, and your best interest, your everlasting inheritance is safe beyond the reach of enemies, in a kingdom, (how unlike the kingdoms of the earth!) which cannot be shaken, Hebrews xii. 28. Your life is hid with Christ in God; and when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory, Col. iii. 3, 4. Thither neither sin nor sorrow shall be able to follow you. Then your sun shall go down no more, and the days of your mourning shall be ended. In patience therefore possess your souls. Be not moved by appearances, but remember all your concerns are in the hands of him who loved you, and gave himself for you. Let those who know him not, tremble when he ariseth to judgment, and to shake terribly the earth; but do you sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, make him your fear and your dread, and he shall be to you for a sanctuary, (Isaiah, viii. 13, 14;) and in a little time he will come to receive you to himself, and to wipe all tears from your eyes.

2. But what can I say to the rest of the congregation? Though they are all met in the same place, and outwardly engaged in the same service, so that, to the eye of man, we may appear as one people, animated with one and the same desires, the eye of the Searcher of hearts sees and notices a real and important distinction amongst us. He draws, with infallible certainty, the line of separation. He knows who are truly on his side, whose hearts are tender, (2 Chron. xxxiv. 27,) who are afraid of his judgments, and are mourning for their own sins, and the sins of the nation: and he knows and sees that too many here have neither his fear nor his love abiding in them. You may comply with an outward form, and abstain from a meal, but you neither abstain from sin, nor desire to do so. To-day you look serious, and by your presence seem to assent to the confessions which have been made, and the prayers which have been offered in your hearing. To-morrow, I fear, will show that all your semblance of seriousness was but

hypocrisy: and that though you drew nigh to God with your lips, (Mark viii. 6,) your hearts were far from him. But be not deceived, God will not be mocked. You have contributed largely to swell the measure of our national sin; herein you have been hearty and persevering. Do not think that the lip-service of a single day will make any alteration either in your state or in your guilt. Rather that pretended humiliation, by which you act towards God as if you thought he was altogether such a one as yourselves, (Ps. l. 21,) is an aggravation of your wickedness, and no better than affronting him to his face. Yet I am glad of an opportunity of speaking to you. Oh, that I could prevail on you to seek him in earnest while he is to be found! You cannot serve, or love, or trust him, unless you be born again. But Jesus is exalted to produce this change in the heart of a sinner, by the power of his Holy Spirit, and to give faith, repentance, and remission of sins. Could I convince you of this, the rest would be easy. Then, feeling your wants and misery, you would ask mercy of him; and asking you would surely receive; for he has said, Him that cometh unto me, I will in nowise cast out, John vi. 37. O Lord, do thou convince them by thine own power! Open the blind eyes, unstop the deaf ears, and turn the stony heart into flesh.

Till this be done you are neither fit to live, nor fit to die. What will you do in a day of public calamity, should you live to see it, if you should be despoiled of your earthly comforts, and have no share in the consolation of the gospel? But should the Lord answer prayer and prolong our national prosperity, still you must be ruined unless you are saved by grace. For what will you do in the hour of death? This is inevitable, and may, for ought you know, be very near. If I could assure you of peace and wealth for the term of a long life, still without the peace of God, and an interest in the unsearchable riches of Christ, you must be miserable at the last, and lie down in sorrow.

But oh that we may rather with one consent search and try our ways, and turn to the Lord from whom we have so greatly revolted! To us, indeed, belong shame and confusion of face, but to the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against him.

A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. PAUL'S, DEPTFORD,

ON SUNDAY, MAY 7, 1786,

ON THE LAMENTED OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF

RICHARD CONYERS, L. L. D.

LATE RECTOR OF THAT PARISH.

So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.—1 Thess. ii. 8.

An active undaunted zeal in the service of God, and a peculiar tenderness of affection towards his people, were happily and eminently combined in the character of St. Paul. The latter appears in none of his writings to greater advantage than in this Epistle, and particularly in this chapter. He had been made very useful to the Thessalonians, and was greatly beloved by them. Many of them had received the gospel which he preached, not in word only, but in power; and were effectually turned, by grace, from dead idols, to serve the living and the true God, 1 Thess. i. 5—9. They likewise were very dear to him; and being now at a distance from them, he writes to confirm their faith and hope, to animate and direct their conduct. And he takes many occasions of reminding them, of the peculiar regard he had borne them from the first, and how near they still were to his heart; that his love for them, which had sweetened all his labours and sufferings when he was among them, made him still solicitous for their welfare, and enabled him to rejoice on their account, while he was suffering bonds and imprisonment at Rome.

The verse I have read is one passage, out of many in the New Testament, where our translation does not fully come up to the spirit and beauty of the original. Not that it is unfaithful or faulty; it is chiefly owing to the difference of the languages. I believe we have no single word in the English tongue, to express the energy of the Greek term ιμειρομενοι, which he uses in the beginning of the verse; and therefore our translators have employed two, "Being affectionately desirous of you." It denotes a desire connected with the finest and most tender feelings of the heart; not like the degrading selfish desire of the miser for gold; but such an emotion (according to his own beautiful illustration in the preceding verse) as that with which the nurse, the mother while a nurse, contemplates her own child. Being thus disposed towards you, "we were willing"—but the Greek ευδοκημεν is more emphatical. We esteemed it our pleasure, our joy, the very height of our wishes, "to impart unto you the gospel of God," to put you into our own place, to communicate to you, by the gospel, all that comfort and strength, and joyful hope, which we have received from it ourselves. Yea, further, to have imparted to you our own souls also; that is, to devote our whole strength, time, and study, to this very end, to spend and be spent for you, and to be ready to seal our testimony with our blood, if this were needful to your establishment, "because ye are dear" (αγαπητοι,) exceedingly dear unto us. The same word is used (for the language of mortals will not afford a stronger,) Matt. iii. 17. "This is my beloved Son."

When I thought of preaching to you this day, and of mingling my tears with yours, the occasion suggested the choice I have made of a text; and the countenances of many of you convince me that I have not made an improper choice. Another congregation might have been led, from what I have al-

ready said, to sympathize with the Thessalonians, in what they must have felt when they were deprived of such a minister and friend; but your minds are engaged by a sense of your own loss. You have reason. You acknowledge and feel, that if I wished (as I certainly did) to select a text which might, while you heard it, strongly impress your minds with the idea of my dear friend, your late pastor, and recal to your remembrance, his principles, actions, motives, and aims, how he spoke, and how he lived among you, I could hardly have found a passage in the whole scripture more directly suited to my purpose. I believe no minister in the present age, nor perhaps in any past age, since the apostle's days, could have a better warrant than Dr. Conyers, to adopt these words of St. Paul as expressive of his own spirit and character. He had a very tender affection for you: it was his earnest desire, and his great delight, to impart unto you the gospel of God, because you were dear to him: and it may be said of him with peculiar propriety, that in this service of love, he imparted to you his own soul, or life also. You have not forgotten, surely you never can forget, the very solemn and affecting manner in which his ministry among you closed. Whether, while he was reading the apostle's farewell discourse to the elders of the church of Ephesus, (Acts xx. 18—35,) which occurred in the second lesson for the day, he had a presage that you would see his face no more, we know not. Had he been certain of it, he could not have taken your consciences more earnestly to witness, that he was clear of your blood, and that he had not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God. However, the event proved, that you then saw and heard him for the last time. His strength and life were prolonged to finish his discourse, and to pronounce over you his parting blessing, which he had scarcely finished, before he was called home to his Master's joy. "Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing," Luke xii. 43.

In considering the grounds of the apostle's love to the Thessalonians, and the proofs which he gave of it, the subject will frequently lead me to bear a testimony to the grace of God, vouchsafed to your late minister, of whom we may truly say, he was a follower of St. Paul, as Paul also was of Christ, 1 Cor. xi. 1.

I. The first ground, the original cause of the apostle's love to the brethren, was the love of Christ. His unwearied endeavours, in the midst of the hardships and dangers which awaited him in every place, to promote the happiness of mankind, made him appear to many who were unacquainted with the motives of his conduct, as though he were beside himself. The apology he offered was, the love of Christ constraineth us, 2 Cor. v. 14. Till he knew the Lord, he acted very differently. While he was under the power of prejudice and ignorance, he verily thought that he ought to do many things against the name of Jesus of Nazareth, (Acts ix. 1; xxvi. 9,) and therefore breathed out threatenings and slaughter against his people. But Jesus whom he persecuted appeared to him in his way to Damascus, convinced him of his sin, vouchsafed him pardon, and commissioned him to preach the faith which he had laboured to destroy, Gal. i. 23. From that time he esteemed himself a chief sinner, (1 Tim. i 15, 16,) and because much had been forgiven him, he loved much. He devoted his whole future life to proclaim the glory and grace of his Saviour, and to propose himself as a pattern of his long-suffering and mercy to all around him, that they likewise might believe and be saved. He was conscious of his Saviour's just right to reign in every heart. And they who, by receiving the gospel which he preached, entered into his views, and loved the Lord whom he loved, instantly became dear to him for his Lord's sake, whether they were Jews or Gentiles, rich or poor, bond or free. It is probable, that all who are convinced and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, having a clearer knowledge of the nature, number, and aggravation of their own sins, than they can possibly have of those of any other person, account themselves among the chief of sinners, though many of them may have been preserved from gross enormities. I never heard that your minister was influenced, like Saul of Tarsus, by a bitter persecuting spirit; and I believe his behaviour was moral and exemplary from his youth. When he entered upon his ministry at his beloved Helmsley, in Yorkshire, he found the place ignorant and dissolute to a proverb. At this early period of life, he feared God, and he hated wickedness. With much zeal and diligence he attempted the reformation of his parish, which was of great extent, and divided into several hamlets. He preached frequently in them all. He encouraged his parishioners to come to his house. He distributed them into little companies, that he might instruct them with more convenience; he met them in rotation by appointment. In this manner, long before he fully understood that gospel of God which of late years he so successfully imparted to you, I have been assured that he often preached or exhorted publicly, or more privately, twenty times in a week. These labours were not in vain: a great, visible, and almost universal reformation took place. About the time I am speaking of, a clergyman in his neighbourhood made very honourable mention of Dr. Conyers, in a letter to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, (which I have seen in print,) as perhaps the most exemplary, indefatigable, and successful parochial minister

in the kingdom; yet in the midst of applause and apparent success, he was far from being satisfied with himself. He did what he could: he did more than most others; but he felt there was something still wanting, though for a time he knew not what; but he was desirous to know: he studied the scriptures, and he prayed to the Father of lights. They who thus seek shall surely find. Important consequences often follow from a sudden involuntary turn of thought. One day an expression of St. Paul's, "the unsearchable riches of Christ," (Ephes. iii. 8,) engaged his attention. He had often read the passage, but never noticed the word *unsearchable* before. The gospel, in his view of it, had appeared plain, and within his comprehension; but the apostle spoke of it as containing something that was unsearchable. A conclusion therefore forced itself upon him, that the idea he had hitherto affixed to the word *gospel*, could not be the same with that of the apostle. From this beginning he was soon led to perceive, that his whole scheme was essentially defective, that his people, however outwardly reformed, were not converted.—He now felt himself a sinner, and felt his need of faith in a Saviour, in a manner he had never done before. Thus he was brought with the apostle, to account his former gain but loss: the unsearchable riches of Christ opened to his mind, he received power to believe, his perplexities were removed, and he rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory. He presently told his people, with that amiable simplicity which so strongly marked his character, that though he had endeavoured to show them the way of salvation, he had misled them; that what both he and they had been building was not upon the right foundation. He from that time preached Jesus Christ, and him crucified, (1 Cor. ii. 2. i. 30,) as the only ground of hope for sinners, and the only source from whence they could derive wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. The Lord so blessed his word, that the greater part of the people who were most attached to him soon adopted his views, and many more were successively added to them. This change in his sentiments and manner of preaching, though it added efficacy to his moral instructions, and endeared him to his people at home, lost him much of that high estimation in which he had been held abroad. But he knew the gospel of God too well to be ashamed of it: whatever disgrace he suffered in such a cause, he could bear with patience. He loved his people and was beloved by them; and their advance in comfort and holiness made him ample compensation for the unkindness of those who knew not what they did. And thus, when the providence of God removed him hither, the constraining love of Christ, which had long been the great principle of his conduct, disposed him to love you before he saw you; and he came among you with an earnest desire to impart unto you the gospel of God, and his own soul also, because from the moment that he accepted the charge over you, he was affectionately desirous of you.

The regard of the apostle to the Thessalonians was undoubtedly heightened in proportion as the Lord was pleased to give him seals to his ministry among them. And the like cause had the like effect here. The mutual affection that subsists between a faithful minister and those to whom the Lord makes him useful, is of a peculiar kind, and not easily described. I trust he looked upon many of you with joy, as his crown and glory in the day of Christ, (1 Thess. ii. 19; and you, I doubt not, looked on him with respect and gratitude, as the instrument of God in saving your souls, in calling you out of darkness into marvellous light. What were some of you doing, and whither were you going, when God sent you, by him, the word of salvation? And what a happy change have you since experienced? You were then dead in trespasses and sins, without Christ, and therefore without hope, and without God in the world, Ephes. ii. 1, 12, 13. But now you, who were some time afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. Now being freed from the slavery of sin, you have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life, Rom. vi. 22. You have now access to God, communion with him, an interest in his promises, and a good hope through grace that though your minister be taken from you, he who by him began a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ, Phil. i. 6. Let this thought moderate your grief. You will see the face of your minister no more here; but you will meet him again, ere long, before the throne of God and the Lamb. Then all tears will be for ever wiped away.

Again, during the apostle's continuance with the Thessalonians, he and they had enjoyed precious seasons of worship together, and of mutual communion with God, in the ordinances of his appointment. Wherever two or three are met in the Lord's name, (Matt. xviii. 20,) he is mindful of his promise, and does manifest himself unto them as he does not unto the world, (John xiv. 22;) and these tastes of his loving kindness wonderfully soften, spiritualize, and enlarge their affections, and knit them closer and closer together in love. And though that power and unction from on high, which makes the ordinances of the gospel truly delightful, and an hour so employed preferable to a thousand of the world's hours, (Psal. lxxxiv. 10,) does not altogether depend upon the gifts, or even upon the grace of the minister; yet it is doubtless a singular and high privilege, to be under the care of a wise and tender shepherd, of one who in the school of expe-

rience has acquired the tongue of the learned, (Isa. l. 4,) who knows how to adapt himself to the occasions of the people, to give every one their proper portion, to obviate their doubts, relieve their fears, point out their dangers, and to speak a word in season to them that are weary Be thankful that you were long favoured with such an able minister of the New Testament. As a public preacher, he may perhaps have left some equals behind him. But he had at Deptford, as formerly at Helmsley, stated seasons, when he expounded the scriptures to a smaller auditory in his house, or within his own premises. He supposed that on these occasions few persons were present but those who either possessed the peace of the gospel, or were sincerely seeking it. The simplicity and meekness of wisdom with which, as a father among his children, he exhorted, comforted, and instructed these his more select hearers, seemed peculiar to himself. In this branch of his ministerial office I always thought him unequalled and inimitable. How often have many of you had reason to say, at such seasons, "Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" Luke xxiv. 32. And the great attention with which he was heard, and the proofs he saw that his labours were not in vain, rendered him still more affectionately desirous towards you.

For, lastly, as one great reason why the apostle loved the Thessalonians was, that they were not only hearers, but doers of the word, and he could speak of them with pleasure, and propose them to others as examples of the efficacy and tendency of the gospel which he preached, (1 Thess. i. 8, 9;) so I trust, yea I know, that some of you were exceedingly dear to your late minister on this account, also. He could say of you and to you, "Now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord," 1 Thess. iii. 8. He had no greater joy than to see his children walk in the truth, (3 John 4,) and demonstrate by their conduct, that the gospel which they professed was a doctrine according to godliness. Those of you who gave him this pleasure, may, now he is gone, praise God for the grace which enabled you to administer to the comfort of one who so tenderly watched over your souls. He was proportionably affected with pungent grief, when any whom he loved acted unsuitably to their profession, though they, perhaps, seldom knew what their unfaithfulness cost him. In his preaching he bore a strenuous and faithful testimony against every evil, not only against gross sins, but against every deviation, whether in temper or practice, from the spirit and rule of the gospel. But there was something in his natural disposition which made it difficult for him to expostulate plainly and strongly in private.—In private, he could not easily reprove. But he could mourn, he could wear out the day without pleasure, and the night without rest, in bemoaning those who had neither compassion for him nor for themselves. I can affirm this of him, from instances which have come to my own knowledge. Perhaps some person present may think, Surely the preacher has heard of me, and means to point me out to the notice of the congregation. No; it is your own conscience points you out; I know you not. But is it so, indeed, that you broke your minister's rest, and added to his troubles by your miscarriages? You do well to weep: may God give you repentance not to be repented of! 2 Cor. vii. 10. Will not his lamented and sudden death recal to your remembrance how earnestly he warned you, and pleaded with you, while he was living, and rouse you from that dangerous security into which you have been seduced by the deceitfulness of sin?

II. I have, in a great measure, anticipated what I purposed to mention under a second head—the proofs which he gave, that the affection he professed for his people was cordial and sincere. But the subject is not exhausted: St. Paul evidenced his love to the Thessalonians by imparting to them the gospel of God, and by his unwearied zeal and diligence in their service, in defiance of the difficulties and obstacles which always attended his labours. By the strong expression, that he was ready to impart unto them his own soul also, he intimates both the energy of his address, and his fixed determination to venture every consequence in their service.

In another place, the apostle, speaking of the doctrine which he preached, says, "according to my gospel," Rom. ii. 16. It was not a point of speculation with him: he possessed it. He had experienced the power of it; it was the spring of his conduct, the source of his comfort, and was therefore properly his own. Here he styles it the "gospel of God," perhaps to distinguish it from a pretended gospel, such as the Galatians received from false teachers, which he calls "another gospel," (Gal. i. 6, 7,) and which was indeed not the gospel. The true gospel is of God. It is the glorious gospel of the blessed God, 1 Tim. i. 11. From whence we infer its certainty, authority, and importance. It is worthy of all acceptation: it is able to make us wise unto salvation, if cordially embraced, (2 Tim. iii. 15;) and to neglect it, is to refuse life, to choose death, to resolve to be miserable, and to affront the wisdom and goodness of God. When Paul preached this gospel at Thessalonica, it awakened the spirit of envy, opposition, and clamour, in many who believed not; but they who received it, experienced it to be the power of God, to the salvation of their souls.

This gospel your late minister preached among you, and, I trust, effectually imparted

to many of you, as an instrument of the Holy Spirit. He owed all his success, and you derive all the light and comfort you obtained under his instruction, to the doctrine which he delivered. It cannot with reason be expected, that God will afford the seal of his blessing to any scheme of doctrine but his own truth. A preacher may be of a good character in civil life, and diligent in his office, and he may have some success in suppressing outward wickedness, though he does not preach the gospel of God; but he will not reach the hearts of his people, wean them from their secret sins, and win them to the love and practice of universal holiness, unless he preaches St. Paul's gospel. I hope this congregation has been better taught, than to receive every thing indiscriminately for truth because it is spoken from a pulpit. You have the scriptures in your hands, and by this standard you are warranted, yea, commanded, to try the spirits, (1 John iv. 1,) because many false prophets and pretended teachers are abroad in the world: however, I will take the liberty to remind you of some plain and sure marks by which you will be able to distinguish a faithful minister of the true gospel.

He will preach Christ Jesus the Lord, and propose him as the only foundation of a sinner's hope, the only object of faith, the way, the truth, and the life. He will endeavour to convince you of your need of mercy, and then direct your thoughts to the atonement which Christ made for sin, by his bloody death upon the cross. He will give you no encouragement to think you can do any thing well-pleasing to God till you yourselves are first made acceptable in the beloved; nor until his love is the motive of your obedience, and your dependance is fixed upon the promised communications of strength and grace from his fulness.

By a manifestation of the truth, he will commend himself to your consciences in the sight of God, 2 Cor. iv. 2. He will not amuse you with the discussion of some curious point, in which you have little immediate interest, or some cold general common-place subject. Many sermons, ingenious in their kind, may be compared to a letter put into the post-office without a direction. It is addressed to nobody, it is owned by nobody; and if a hundred people were to read it, not one of them would think himself concerned in the contents. But the word of the gospel, when faithfully dispensed, searches the heart, (Heb. iv. 12,) and tries the reins. You will wonder that the preacher, who perhaps is a stranger to you, can so exactly suit himself to your case. He will sometimes bring to your remembrance what you have done or said, or even what you have only thought, and which, possibly, you had forgotten. So that if you are going on in your sins, or are vailed under a cloak of hypocrisy, you will be ready to start, and think he is about to expose you publicly. Or if you are a mourner in Zion, distressed with fear and temptation, beset with trouble, and know not which way to turn, that tongue of the learned, which he has acquired in the school of experience, will frequently lead him, while speaking from his own feelings, to meet you with a word in season, so exactly suited to your case, that, if you had told him the state of your mind, and every particular of your situation beforehand, he could not have described them better. Such is the correspondence between the word of God and the heart of man; and such is the similarity of the workings of the human heart in similar circumstances, that the preacher who is enlightened by the scripture, and by the Holy Spirit, while he does little more than relate the exercises of his own mind, appears to many of his hearers to express their hopes and fears, their joys and sorrows, better than they could have expressed them to him. Thus it is that the secrets of the heart are made manifest (1 Cor. xiv. 25,) by the preaching of the gospel. All other preaching, compared with this, is lifeless, distant, and unaffecting, little more than declamation; but the words of a scribe (Matt. xiii. 52,) well instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom of God, come home to our own business and bosoms, and constrain many to say, with the woman of Samaria, "Come and see a man which told me all things that ever I did," John iv. 29.

A true servant of God in the gospel may likewise be known, at least in the place where he resides, or statedly labours, by a certain mixed kind of character, which he will receive from public report. The general tenor of his conduct will be such, that the feeble attempts of slander to vilify him, will be gradually suppressed, and they who would speak evil of him, be put to shame and to silence, by his good conversation in Christ, 1 Pet. iii. 16. But though his behaviour be unimpeachable and exemplary, his principles will be misunderstood and misrepresented; and by different persons (sometimes by the same persons,) very different and inconsistent things will be laid to his charge. He will often be deemed rigid, precise, uncharitable, enjoining a strictness in life and manners to the extreme; so that, to adopt his views, and to follow his rules, a person must bid farewell to comfort, and almost renounce society; while in the same day, and almost in the same breath, he will be represented as preaching doctrines which, if generally received, would be unfavourable to good morals, and promote licentiousness. For the natural heart has a dislike equally to the grace and to the

holiness of the gospel. Salvation by faith in the blood of Jesus is thought too easy, and affording too much encouragement to the unworthy; and the simple grateful obedience which characterizes those who seek salvation in this way, and in no other, is thought too strict and scrupulous, and carrying of things a great deal too far. They who are of the world, who speak to the world, and whom the world is willing to hear, give no offence, and therefore no clamour is excited against them; but a faithful minister will not be exposed to the woe (Luke vi. 26,) denounced against those of whom all men speak favourably. His infirmities and mistakes (for he is not perfect) will be eagerly noticed and exaggerated; and if no just fault can be found, he must at least expect to be spoken of as an enthusiast, or branded by some name to which ignorance and prejudice have affixed a contumelious sense.

Such a one was your late minister. Like the apostle, he laboured to impart to his hearers the gospel of God: like him, he was unmoved by the opposition of those who knew not what they did, and ready to endure all things for the elect's sake, that they might be saved, 2 Tim. ii. 10. He loved you, and was willing to impart to you his own soul also. His spirit was willing; he did much, and wished he could have done more.

It was indeed a surprise to many who were not intimately acquainted with him, that he did no more. And it may be thought by some persons, that as, by his countenance, he seemed to enjoy a tolerable share of health, his public services were hardly answerable to the zeal of a man who was ready to pour out his very life for the good of souls. He preached but once a week in his parish church; and no arguments, persuasions, or entreaties, could prevail on him to enter any pulpit but his own. Even when he has been expressly nominated by his diocesan to preach in another church, he has declined the service, and disappointed crowded auditories who wished to hear him. The benefits of his singular abilities were therefore confined to his own congregations. And it was with the greatest difficulty, and but seldom, that his most intimate friends could engage him to lead in family-worship, where he has been occasionally present. I have frequently mentioned to him my concern that the sphere of his usefulness should be so much limited; and he lamented it himself; but his hindrance was constitutional and invincible. He had a continued hurry and flutter upon his spirits, the effects of which were unaccountable to those who knew not the cause. Taken in different views, he might be considered as very happy or very uncomfortable at the same instant. In the most important sense, he was a happy man. He had peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, enjoyed much of the light of his countenance, and had no perplexing doubts respecting either his acceptance in the Beloved, or his perseverance in grace. Yet, through the agitation of his spirits, he spent his days, and almost every hour, in trepidation and alarm. The slightest incidents were sufficient to fill him with fears, which, though he knew to be groundless, he could not overcome. But upon no occasions did he suffer more from these painful feelings, than when he had public preaching in prospect. When he met his people at home, he usually found pleasure and liberty, unless he observed some new faces. But the sight of a stranger, especially if he knew or suspected him to be a minister, would sometimes distress him greatly, and almost disable him from speaking. It may seem very extraordinary, that a man of the first abilities as a preacher, highly respected, and honoured with eminent usefulness, should be intimidated by the presence of those who were much his inferiors. But such was his burden, which neither reflection nor resolution could remove. What he often suffered before he ascended this pulpit, and when he looked round upon a large congregation, and knew not how many such persons as he was afraid of might be among them, gave him a right to say, in a singular sense, that in imparting the gospel of God to you, he imparted his own soul also. Perhaps there have been martyrs, who approached the rack or the stake with less distressing sensations, than he has frequently felt when about to enter upon his otherwise delightful work. Yet, because you were the people of his immediate charge, and dear to him, he seldom declined your service on the forenoon of the Lord's day, if he was well. But this, I believe, was the reason, that at other times, instead of preaching in the church, he confined himself to a place where few, comparatively, could attend him. I do not know, that while he lived at Deptford, he ever preached publicly in this neighbourhood, excepting once, when he accepted an appointment to preach at the archdeacons' Visitation at Dartford. But he kept his intention a secret in his own breast; and did not mention it to his nearest friends; lest a multitude should be drawn to hear him. And he told me himself, that from the hour he stood engaged, which was several weeks before the time, he could scarcely think of any thing else; and that when the day arrived, his spirits were so greatly agitated, that for some minutes after he was in the pulpit, he was deprived of his eye-sight. But the Lord whom he served, supported him; and he was, upon the whole, carried comfortably through the service.

If we speak of death as the moment of separation between soul and body, he was not afraid of it; for he knew whom he believed; and that to depart and be with his Lord, was (πολλω μαλλον κρεισσον) unspeakably preferable to any thing that could be enjoyed in the present life, Phil. i. 23. But though not afraid of death, he was often afraid of dying. His apprehensions of the possible forerunners and concomitants of a dying hour, frquently made a painful impression upon his spirits. Upon this account, they who loved him, have reason to be reconciled to the suddenness of his removal. His was an honourable dismission indeed! The messenger that called him home, found him actually and actively employed in his Master's service, with his loins girded up, and his lamp burning, Luke xii. 35. It was likewise a gracious condescension to his infirmity, and saved him from an experience of any of those conflicts, which he could seldom think of without anxiety, and a degree of anguish.

Upon the whole, I may say of Dr. Conyers, without just fear of contradiction, he was a burning and a shining light, John v. 35. Many of you rejoiced in his light; and now, the man who cared for your souls, who was the minister of God to you for good, is taken from you, your sorrow is proportionable. Yet, if you truly entered into his views, you are not destitute. The Saviour whom he preached, and in whom ye have believed, is still with you. The stream at which you have often drank, and found refreshment, is dried up; but the fountain of living waters, from whence it was derived, is always full, and always flowing. Whoever dies, Jesus lives; the residue of the Spirit is with him, and he is at no loss for means to communicate his blessings to those who wait upon him: yea, under his management, even losses prove gains, and apparent hindrances work to the help and furtherance of faith. Be thankful that you were so long favoured with such a minister and rejoice that though you can see him no more in this world, you shall meet him again in the world of light. In the meantime (need I say) respect and honour his memory; and the most effectual manner by which you can show your regard to him, will be, by walking as he walked, and maintaining a conversation becoming the gospel, (Phil. i. 27,) which he so affectionately and faithfully imparted to you.

But there are, I fear, amongst you, those who accounted the joyful sound of the gospel, which he proclaimed, a burden; have been wearied by his earnest endeavours to pluck you as brands from the burning, and have often wished to be freed from his importunity. Now you have your wishes. Your faithful monitor is removed. He will alarm your consciences, he will offend your pride no more. But if, after slighting his labours of love while he lived, you remain likewise unaffected by his death, you are much more to be pitied than those who lament his removal. Alas! when numbers in different and distant places, who never saw you, are concerned for you, will you not yet be concerned for yourselves? Tremble, lest you should have cause to say, "the harvest is past, the summer is ended, but we are not saved!" Jer. viii. 20. You have had your opportunity, a day of grace, in which the things pertaining to your peace have been set before you. The Lord forbid that the following words should be applicable to you: "but now they are hidden from your eyes!" Luke xix. 42. The Saviour, whom you have too long slighted, is now once more preached to you. He is still upon a throne of grace, able and willing to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him. But hereafter he will appear on a throne of judgment, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not his gospel, 2 Thess. i. 8.

THE BEST WISDOM;

A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH,

ON WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 1787,

THE DAY OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE AMONG THE POOR.

———*He that winneth souls is wise.*—Proverbs, xi. 30.

Only he, who redeemed the soul by his blood, is able effectually to win it to himself. The work is his, and they who know him will render the praise to him alone. But in this respect, as in many others, there is an analogy between the natural and the moral world. In both, he displays his power and executes his purposes by an instituted course of means and instruments. In both, he often so conceals his operations under the vail of second causes, that to a common and inattentive eye, he seems to do nothing, when in reality he does all. The manna with which he fed Israel in the wilderness, though more immediately and visibly, was not more certainly the effect and proof of his providence and goodness, than the bread by which we live. It is he who giveth the earth virtue to produce corn; (Psalms civ. 14;) the discretion of the husbandman who prepareth the ground and soweth the seed is from him; (Is. xxviii. 24—29;) and the influence of the sun and the rain, so necessary to ripen the grain, and to clothe the fields with plenty in the season of harvest, (Matt. v. 43,) is the influence of him who worketh all in all. In this process, the blessing which secures the desired event, is wholly from the Lord, though the labour of man and the use of means are indispensable, because his appointment has made them so.

Thus in the great concern of winning souls, though God, whose thoughts and ways are as far above ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth, may, sometimes, as in the instance of the apostle Paul, (Acts ix. 6,) affect and win the heart by an immediate and instantaneous exertion of his power; yet this is not his ordinary method. Though fallen, we are still rational creatures, and he is pleased to treat us as such He proposes considerations and motives in his holy word, which though ineffectual, considered merely as means, and without the concurrence of his agency, yet have, in their own nature, a moral tendency and suitableness to awaken our attention, and to convince us of our sin and misery, and to recal us to our original state of dependence upon his goodness, and obedience to his will. For the proof of this I may appeal to the consciences of many persons: the force of truth has compelled them to tremble, like Felix, and perhaps, like Herod, to do many things; and though their depravity has been too obstinate to yield to conviction, they have understood and felt enough, to leave them without excuse.

The Lord God usually employs those whom he has already won and subdued by his grace, as instruments of winning others; and there are none of his people, however weak their capacities, or however low their situations in life, but may hope for a share in this honour, if they are faithful to the light he has given them, and live according to the rule of his word.—But he has instituted the office of the gospel-ministry with a more especial view to this important service.

The proposition in the text is simple and plain; and the principal division of my subject is suggested by the appearance of our present assembly. I never had an opportunity before of preaching to so many of my brethren in the ministry, and perhaps I never may again. And at my time of life, it becomes me, whenever I stand in the pulpit, to consider seriously, that it is, at least, possible, it may be the last time, and that you, to whom I am now about to speak, may see my face no more. Were I even sure of this, how could I more properly close my public services,

than by aiming with my latest breath, to impress upon you, my friends and brethren, this weighty aphorism, "He that winneth souls is wise?" May it be written upon my own heart while I live! may it be written upon all our hearts! Let the scholar, the philosopher, the politician, settle their several claims to wisdom among themselves; but may this wisdom be ours. The man that winneth souls is truly and emphatically wise.

I shall, in the first place, point out the principal acknowledged characteristics of wisdom, and show, that they are all exemplified in the spirit and conduct of the minister who is duly qualified for the service of winning souls. I do not say that all faithful ministers are influenced by this wisdom in the same degree; but unless it has an habitual and prevailing influence on the plans and practice of a public teacher, we need not wonder if he be neither faithful nor useful. My chief design is to elucidate and confirm this first point; but towards the close of my discourse, I shall, secondly, address myself to private christians, and remind you of your common interest with us in this concern, and the advantages and opportunities you have of showing yourselves wise, by contributing your endeavours to promote the great design of winning souls.

I. The minister who winneth souls is wise.

1. Wisdom is discovered in the choice of a fit and valuable end. If a man has great talents and abilities, we do not account him wise, unless he employs them properly; a life whiled away in low and trivial pursuits, implies a want of wisdom. But he who aims at winning souls, proposes an end which well deserves his application, and will, so far as he succeeds, richly compensate him for all that he can do or suffer in so good a cause. The grand object of his life, in subordination to the will and glory of God, is the recovery of souls. We often use the word *win*, in a sense which the Hebrew term suggests; as to win a battle or a fortress. The soul, in its fallen state, separated and alienated from God, is, by his righteous permission, under the power of Satan, who rules in it as a strong one armed in his own house or castle, Luke xi. 21; Eph. ii. 2. Were the effects of this bondage confined to the present life, an attempt to free the soul from that misery, mischief, and madness, with which the world is filled, would be honourable and important. But God, who formed the soul originally for himself, has given it such a vast capacity, that nothing short of himself can satisfy its desires; and it is likewise, by his constitution, immortal. This capacity of being exquisitely happy or miserable, and that for ever, renders the soul so valuable in the judgment of its Creator, that he gave the Son of his love to redeem it from sin and misery, by his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. By this adorable method of adjusting the demands of his justice and the honour of his government, to the purposes of his mercy, his wisdom and glory are more eminently discovered to his intelligent creatures, than by all his other works. If the only wise God commends to us his gracious design of recovering souls from the dominion of Satan, and of winning them to himself, as the highest instance of his wisdom and goodness: then, certainly, he who proposes it as the great end of his life, that by serving God in the ministry, he may be an instrument of winning souls, is truly wise, so far as concerns his leading aim and object.

2. Wisdom directs us likewise to a consideration and choice of means proper to the attainment of a proposed end. To attempt what is impracticable, however desirable it might be thought, upon a supposition that it could be accomplished, is a mark, not of wisdom, but of folly. A man, without being chargeable with rashness, may undertake to move a stone of several tons weight, and even to raise it, if needful, to the top of a tower; or to force open the strongest gate of a castle; but then the application of mechanical powers would be necessary. If he were unacquainted with these, or disdained to employ them; if, without estimating or considering the resistance to be overcome, and relying solely on his personal strength, he should attempt to move the enormous stone with his hands, or to burst the gates of brass and bars of iron asunder with his feet, his utmost efforts must issue in weariness and disappointment, and no one would think him wise. The experience of ages has demonstrated all endeavours to win souls, to free them from prejudice, to reclaim them from the love and practice of sin, by the mere force of human arguments and moral suasion, to be equally chimerical and unsuccessful. The heathen moralists laboured much in this way, but they laboured in vain. Some of them felt and acknowledged that human nature was depraved; but not knowing the root, nor the extent, nor the proper remedy of the disorders they wished to cure, their best sentiments, however specious in theory, made little more impression upon the hearts of their admirers, or even upon their own, than the falling snow makes upon a rock. If the ancient sages could do but little, the modern philosophers, as they choose to be called, have done, if possible, still less. What a poet observed of the former, is, at least equally, applicable to the latter: *Virtus laudatur et alget.* Virtue is defined, described, recommended, and praised, but wickedness and folly rapidly increase under their instructions; and while in their pompous declamations they propose liberty to others, (1 Pet. ii. 19,) they are themselves the servants, the slaves of corruption. The gospel of Christ, the glorious gospel of the blessed God, (1 Tim. i. 11,) is the only ef-

fectual mean for reforming mankind. To the man who possesses, and knows the use of this grand, this wonderful machine, if I may be allowed the comparison, what is otherwise impracticable becomes easy. The gospel removes difficulties insuperable to human power. It causes the blind to see, the deaf to hear, (Isa. xxxv. 8; Matt. xi. 5;) it softens the heart of stone, and raises the dead in trespasses and sin to a life of righteousness. No force, but that of the gospel, is sufficient to remove the mountainous load of guilt from an awakened conscience, to calm the violence of tumultuous passions, to raise an earthly soul from grovelling in the mire of sensuality or avarice, to a spiritual and divine life, a life of communion with God. No system but the gospel can communicate motives, encouragements, and prospects, sufficient to withstand and counteract all the snares and temptations with which the spirit of this world, by its frowns or its smiles, will endeavour, either to intimidate or to bribe us from the path of duty. But the gospel, rightly understood and cordially embraced, will inspire the slothful with energy, and the fearful with courage. It will make the miser generous, melt the churl into kindness, tame the raging tiger in the breast, and in a word, expand the narrow selfish heart, and fill it with a spirit of love to God, cheerful unreserved obedience to his will and benevolence to mankind.

I shall not trespass upon your time, by delineating at large my idea of the gospel. Yet it may be proper to mention three points, which, in my judgment, are essential to it.

The first respects the character of Jesus the Saviour: That he is very God, and very man, God manifest in the flesh: that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God: that this divine Word assumed our nature into a personal union with himself, lived and died in behalf of sinners, and now reigns upon the throne of glory, over all, God blessed for ever, (1 Tim. iii. 16; John i. 1, 14:) that he is the proper object of our worship, supreme love, trust and adoration: that it is he on whom the eyes and expectation of sinners, sensible of their wants and miseries, are fixed, and out of whose fulness they all receive life, strength, comfort, and grace, to help in time of need, Psalm xxxiv. 5; John i. 16. This doctrine is the pillar and ground of truth, 1 Tim. iii. 15. They who have a right sense of the guilt and power of sin, of the holiness and majesty of God, and of the hosts of enemies combined against their peace, must sink into despair, unless supported by the knowledge of an Almighty Omnipresent Saviour, who is always near, a very present help in trouble, and who can discern the thoughts of the heart, (Rev. ii. 23;) for often their most trying and dangerous exigences are beyond the reach of a creature's eye. Whatever they thought of him before, when they know themselves, they cannot entrust their souls to the power, or care, or compassion of a creature; and therefore rejoice that they are warranted and encouraged to commend themselves to him, as to a faithful creator, 1 Pet. iv. 19.

The second grand peculiarity of the gospel is the doctrine of an atonement: That Christ in his state of humiliation, by his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, made a full, proper, and perfect satisfaction for sin (Phil. ii. 8;) that is, his sufferings unto death, the torments which he endured in his body, and the agonies of his soul, inconceivable to us but by their effects (his bloody sweat in the garden, and his astonishing complaint upon the cross, that God had forsaken him,) exhibited a striking and solemn proof to the world, to the universe, no less to angels than to men, that God, in affording mercy to sinners, still shows his inflexible displeasure against sin, and makes no relaxation in the awful demands of his holiness, justice, and truth. A substitution capable of manifesting the justice of God in the highest exercise of his mercy, that he might appear just in justifying the ungodly, (Rom. iv. 5,) was of such vast importance to the honour of God's character and government, that if it could have been effected by any inferior means, Christ died in vain, Galat. ii. 21. The interposition of a mere creature, even if voluntary, (but what creature would dare to draw upon himself the displeasure of God due to the sins of men?) could not have displayed the full-orbed glory of all the divine perfections, as it now shines forth in the person of Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. iv. 6. None in heaven or in earth were able or worthy to interpose. Therefore the Son said, "Lo I come!" He himself, his ownself, bore our sins in his own body upon the tree, (1 Pet. ii. 24:) he who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, 2 Cor. v. 21.

There is a third point, which is peculiar to the religion of the Bible, and which discriminates it from all religious systems of human institution. There are few of these but contain some important truths. In general, they inculcate a degree of attention to the practice of social virtues. But no other system ever proposed to all persons, and as a general truth, the necessity and certainty of supernatural influence and agency; an agency, which, from the greatness of its effect, and the universality of its proposal (being promised to all without exception who desire it,) must be divine. The bodies of believers are the temples of the Holy Ghost, (1 Cor. vi. 19,) that God dwelleth in them by his Spirit, that they have received the Spirit of God, that they are led by the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, and have communion with the Holy Spirit, (Rom. viii. 4; Galat. v. 18, 25; 1 Cor. xiii. 14;) these

truths are either expressed or strongly implied in almost every page of the New Testament.

The gospel then is a message from God. It stains the pride of human glory, and without regarding the petty distinctions which obtain amongst men with respect to character or rank, it treats them all as sinners in the sight of God, and under the power of depravity strengthened by habit. As such, it points them to a Saviour; it invites and enjoins them to apply to him, to submit to him, and to put their whole trust in him; to renounce all pleas of their own, and to plead his name and his atonement for their pardon and acceptance; and promises to all who thus plead, that the Holy Spirit of God will visit them, dwell in them, and abide with them, to enable them by his gracious influence, both to will and to do according to his good pleasure.

I omit other particulars, nor shall I at present attempt to prove these, farther than by an appeal to observation and experience. I trust, my brethren, we all desire to win souls. It is a good desire, it is a noble, a glorious ambition. I hope we are likewise apprised of the nature of the undertaking, and are too wise to attempt it, or to expect success, by any power or exertion of our own, unless we faithfully and humbly make use of the instrument which God has appointed for the purpose. This instrument is the gospel-message, the principal parts of which I have stated to you. This is the rod of God's strength, which, like the wonder-working rod of Moses, when held up in his name, though wielded by a feeble arm, can perform miracles. And I will venture to affirm, without hesitation, and without exception, that no man, whatever his abilities and qualifications may be in in other respects, though he had the zeal of a martyr and the powers of an angel, will be able to force the strong-holds of Satan, to cast down the lofty imaginations of men, and win souls to holiness and happiness, without it. But if he be called and taught of God to preach this gospel, he will do great things; he will be honoured and successful: he will win souls; he will be numbered among the wise.

Let us appeal to facts. The apostle Paul was eminently successful in winning souls. He planted churches in many different and distant parts of the Roman empire. Wherever he went, power from on high accompanied his word, and made it effectual, according to the commission he had received from the Lord, to open the eyes of the blinded Heathens, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, Acts xxvi. 18. Can we propose a better example for our imitation! Would we know the subject-matter of that preaching which produced such extensive and salutary effects? He gives us full information. He preached Christ crucified; Christ the wisdom and power of God, (1 Cor. i. 23, 24;) the unsearchable riches of Christ, (Ephes. iii. 8;) Christ the Man who shall judge the quick and dead, (Acts xvii. 31; xxvi. 28;) Christ as God, who purchased the church with his own blood. As a wise master-builder, he laid this foundation, and declared, that other foundation can no man lay, 1 Cor. iii. 10, 11. He preached the atonement, that Christ made peace by the blood of his cross, died for us while sinners, and that we are justified by his blood, Col. i. 20. He preached the agency of the Holy Spirit as absolutely necessary and powerfully efficacious, and ascribes that operation by which Christ in his true character is revealed to the heart, to the same power which commanded light to shine out of darkness, in the beginning, 2 Cor. iv. 6. These truths were the weapons of his warfare, 2 Cor. x. 4. He went forth conquering and to conquer, not by the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the spirit of demonstration and power.

I need not tell this auditory what were the doctrines which shook the pillars and foundations of Popery at the Reformation, and diffused a knowledge and practice becoming the profession of Christianity, among many nations which had been long involved in the darkness of ignorance, superstition, and wickedness. In our own land, it was not very long before the principles of the Reformation were severely discountenanced. Particularly in the reign of Charles II. they were opposed by methods which the good providence of God at length effectually restrained, by favouring us with a succession of Princes of the House of Hanover. If the lives and conduct of those who endured fines, stripes, imprisonment, and death for conscience sake, be compared with the spirit and temper of those who inflicted or approved them, I think a candid and attentive inquirer will be at no loss to determine on which side the advantage lay, in point of real religion and sound morality.

The spirit of our present excellent constitution and government allows us a degree of religious liberty unknown to our forefathers, for which we cannot be sufficiently thankful; and the doctrines of the Reformation and of the apostles are still preached. Nor have we reason to fear that sanguinary laws, and the iron hand of arbitrary power, will be employed to silence us. Yet the doctrines themselves are far from being generally acceptable. The spirit of opposition is awake, and active as formerly, though the method of its attack is varied. But great is the truth, and will prevail. It has triumphed over violence and rage; it is equally superior to the arts of subtilty and refinement. We are not afraid to repeat the apostle's challenge: "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of

God?" 1 John v. 5. Which is the scheme of religion in the present day, which produces the most conscientious reverence to the holy name of the Lord our God, the most habitual and devout observance of his holy day, and of family-worship? What kind of preaching evidences itself to be a doctrine according to godliness, by the most numerous and notorious instances of persons reclaimed by it from habits of gross licentiousness, and effectually taught to fear the Lord and depart from evil? What are those principles, which by experience, are found most suitable and most powerful to support the soul under the pressure of great afflictions, or upon the near approach of death? I know there are people under afflictions, who, like Pharaoh, harden themselves yet more; who value themselves upon a proud stoical resolution, and deem it a weakness to complain. But christian fortitude is a very different thing. It is the temper of a humble pardoned sinner, who has entrusted himself and his all to the Saviour, and, believing that he condescends to direct all his concerns, submits to his appointments, not by constraint, but willingly, sensible that the wisdom and love of him in whom he confides will choose better for him than he could possibly choose for himself. I know, or have read, that the American Indians, when put to death by their enemies, in the midst of the most excruciating tortures that cruelty can invent, will sing their war-songs, and insult their tormentors, without uttering a groan or shedding a tear; and I have likewise read of philosophers, who, to confirm their admirers in a persuasion that infidelity had freed them from all fear of death or its consequences, have jested in their dying hours. What a contrast to these is the relation we have of the death of Stephen, who with the utmost composure, committed his departing spirit into the hands of his Saviour, whom he saw ready to receive him, and employed his latest breath in prayer for his murderers! Acts vii. 55—60. When a believer in Jesus is about to die, he does not express the fiend-like phrenzy of a savage, or the ill-timed levity of a buffoon; he is serious and recollected. Conscious of his unworthiness, but knowing whom he has believed, he rejoices with a joy unspeakable and full of glory, 1 Pet. i. 8. There is often a dignity and energy in the language of plain people in dying circumstances, far superior to what might be expected from their former habits of life: they seem to have new ideas and new faculties; heaven opened to them, and opened in them, while yet in the body. Ignorant and profane persons, who are sometimes spectators of such scenes, have been astonished at effects which, though they could not account for, have for the moment secretly extorted from them the wish of Balaam, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his," Num. xxiii. 10. By these effects on the lives and deaths of those who cordially receive it, the gospel which we preach, the doctrine of the cross, approves itself to be the power of God unto salvation, the sure and only mean of winning souls to his favour and image.

If I have taken up too much of your time with this second particular, let the importance of it, and the state of religion amongst us, plead my excuse. Thus far we have advanced—If it be wisdom to aim at a great design, and to adopt the most fit and proper means for the accomplishment, the man my text speaks of is wise. His end is great—to win souls. The mean he employs is the gospel, which God has revealed and instituted for this very purpose, and with which his power and blessing are surely connected by promise.

3. Yet the knowledge of a worthy end, and of the means by which it may be attained, is not sufficient to denominate a man wise. If he be truly wise, and his object of great importance, he will not suffer himself to be easily diverted from it, but will rather hold and manage every inferior concernment in a due subservience and subordination to his main point. Sir Isaac Newton, when a child, might possibly have amused himself, as many other children have done, by blowing up bubbles in soapy water with a pipe. But it was not a childish amusement in the hands of this sublime genius, when he applied it, among other experiments, to discover and establish that theory of light and colours, by which, in his admirable System of Optics, he enlightened the world. But if we speak strictly, the most important employments and discoveries of which mankind are capable, if directed no higher than to the concerns of the present life, are trivial and worthless as the sports of children, or the wretched amusements of lunatics, to an immortal, who is soon, very soon, to pass unto the unseen world, to appear before the judgment-seat of God, and to be fixed, according to his righteous award, in a state of endless happiness or misery. The desire of pleasing God, and of doing all to his glory, which should be the ultimate end of a rational creature, and will be, if he feels his dependence and his obligations, this, like the fabled philosopher's stone, turns every thing into gold, sanctifies the most common actions of life which belong to the situation in which Divine Providence has placed us, and gives them a sublimity and dignity. Consecrated by this intention, they become acts of devotion. They have a very low idea of religion who confine it to what we usually mean by devotional exercises. The truly religious man does indeed bow his knees in secret before the Most High God, he carefully con-

sults his holy word, he waits upon him in his public ordinances. In these ways he derives fresh supplies from the fountain of wisdom and grace, and his strength is renewed. But he does not leave his religion in the closet or the church; it abideth in him, is the governing spring of his whole conduct, and according to the degree of his attainment in faith and love, and allowing for the unavoidable abstractions incidental to our frames (which are too weak and limited to be able to fix our attention closely upon many things at once,) whether he be upon the throne or the bench, upon the parade or the exchange; whether he be called to serve God in a public capacity, or in private life, whether he be in a state of affluence, or earns his honest bread by sweeping the streets—in every station and situation, he is a servant of God, from morning to night: and these very different services are all equally acceptable to him, who seeth not as man seeth, and estimates them, not by their comparative importance in our view, but according to the principle of love by which they are performed, and the sublime end to which they are directed.

But we, my brethren, who are ministers of the gospel, have this great advantage (if indeed we improve it,) that our particular calling as members of society, coincides with our general calling as christians. The person who serves God in a secular calling, may, as I have observed, be equally acceptable to God, because equally devoted to his will; but his advantages and opportunities for winning souls are not equal to ours. It is our professed and appropriate business; and we are freed from the incumbrances of worldly business, that we may give our whole attention to this very thing, Acts vi. 4; 1 Tim. iv. 15, 16. If we are wise, we shall watch and pray against being impeded by any studies and pursuits which have not an evident tendency to promote our success in winning souls. You have probably heard what is related of the address of whale-fishers, when the whale, irritated by the wounds he has received, attacks their boats. It is said they have a tub in readiness to throw into the sea, and that while the whale furiously encounters the tub, the boat has time to escape. Whether this be fact or not, methinks it may suggest a useful lesson to us: Many things not criminal in themselves, will prove so to us, if we suffer them, by engrossing too much of our time and thoughts, to divert us from our principal object. It may be wrong, it may be commendable, for a minister to possess some general knowledge of philosophy, history, criticism, and other branches of literature, or of the controversies which have disturbed the peace of the Church. But *perimus in licitis.* An over-attachment to these studies, though less scandalous, may prove little less hurtful to our ministry than the love of pleasure, or the love of money. He who is duly sensible of the importance and difficulty of winning souls, will find but little leisure for sorting shells or butterflies, for studying grammatical niceties, for poring over manuscripts scarcely legible, for decyphering ancient inscriptions, or entangling himself in the dry uninteresting thickets of controversy. He will be careful lest avocations of this kind should prove like the tubs I have mentioned, amusements to divert his attention from the state of souls around him, who are in danger of perishing in ignorance and sin. We are set as watchmen to sound the alarm, to warn the wicked of their evil ways, to direct inquirers into the paths of peace, to point out the snares and temptations to which they are exposed, to exhort and charge those who profess the truth, that they walk worthy of God who has called them to his kingdom and glory; in a word, to use our best endeavours publicly, and from house to house, (Acts xx. 10; 2 Tim. iv. 2,) in season and out of season, to build up our hearers in their most holy faith. We are to give an account of the talents, opportunities, and souls entrusted to us, and we should tremble at the thought of being then obliged to confess, "while thy servant was busy here and there, the man was gone," 1 Kings xx. 40. If such an eminent man of God as archbishop Usher, though possessed of the faith and hope of the gospel, found cause, when reviewing his past life on his dying bed, to cry out repeatedly and earnestly, "Lord, forgive my sins of omission!" how jealous ought we to be of ourselves! It behoves us to use the language of Nehemiah, to many proposals and pursuits which our inclinations may plead for, "I am doing a great work so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease, while I leave it and come down to you?" Neh. vi. 3. Seldom is any man remarkably successful and eminent in arts or sciences, in the acquisition of wealth or power, who does not resolutely deny himself in other respects, and make every secondary point give place, so far as it stands in competition with his leading and favourite object. Such a determined resolution, to follow the avowed design of our calling as the one thing, in comparison with which every thing else is to be undervalued and neglected, if likely to hinder us, is essential to that wisdom which alone can qualify us for winning souls.

4. This wisdom implies fortitude also. If we engage in this work without counting the cost, and without being apprised of the difficulties and snares to which it may expose us; or if we cannot, in some measure, say with the apostle, None of these things move me (Acts xx. 23,) we shall probably be soon discouraged. What should we think of a statesman, who, having formed a wise and noble

plan for the benefit of a kingdom, and having the means necessary to accomplish it within his power, should be deterred from carrying it into execution, though it was approved by all competent judges, merely because he could not bear to be misunderstood, or misrepresented, by the very lowest of the people, or by the children who play in the street? His want of spirit, upon such a supposition, would doubtless be esteemed a want of wisdom. But this is a faint representation of our folly, if, believing ourselves to be the servants of God, being convinced, as we say, of the worth and danger of souls, and knowing that the gospel of God, committed to our trust (1 Thess. ii. 4,) is the only possible mean of their recovery; a regard to the fear or favour of men should prevail on us to suppress or soften our message, and to accommodate ourselves to their taste, instead of conforming to our instructions, lest we should displease them. Would an earthly king bear with an ambassador who was guilty of such timid treachery? We cannot, my brethren, think too humbly of ourselves, but we may magnify our office, and we ought. In this sense at least, we are ambassadors for Christ, (2 Cor. v. 20,) that the message we are to deliver, is not ours, but his by whom we are sent. We are not answerable for the success, but we are under the strongest obligations to be faithful. And he whose we are, and whom we serve, is well able to support us. Let us not fear the reproach of men, nor be afraid of their revilings, Isa. li. 7. In the sight of our Lord God, all the nations of the earth collected, are less than nothing, and vanity, inconsiderable as the drop that falls unperceived from the bucket, or the dust (Isa. xl. 15,) which cleaves to the scales without affecting the balance. The apostles were wise to win souls. They tried the spirit of the world before us, and were despised and insulted by it. They were accounted the offscouring and filth of all things, and suffered much shame for their Lord's sake; (1 Cor. iv. 18; Acts v. 41;) but they esteemed shame, in such a cause, their highest honour. Jesus endured the cross, and despised the shame for them and for us. He was buffeted, spit on, treated as a madman, a demoniac, and laughed to scorn. Let us go forth bearing his reproach, in meekness of wisdom; instructing those who oppose, not rendering railing for railing, but pitying and praying for them: but let us be firm and unmoved, and not hesitate to speak the truth in love, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. We shall not speak wholly in vain; and to be instrumental in saving one soul from death, is an honour sufficient to compensate for all the slights and contempt we can meet with from an unkind world. It is, indeed, our duty to study to find out acceptable words, to endeavour to please men for their edification, and to be careful not to add to the unavoidable offence of the gospel, by debasing our zeal with the unhallowed fire of an angry spirit: but we degrade our character, if we appear too solicitous to conciliate the good opinion of men, or to depend upon their favour. The Lord who employs us, will take care of us; and to live in a spirit of unreserved dependence upon him, will raise us to a noble independence with respect to creatures. All hearts are in his hands. He will protect our persons and characters, supply our wants, control our enemies, and raise us friends, so far as he sees it needful, without any solicitude on our parts, if we can but put our trust in him. Such are the principles of Christian fortitude. He who is wise to win souls, loves his fellow-creatures, but he cannot fear them, because he fears the Lord. He will neither provoke nor dread their frowns, nor will he meanly court their smiles. He knows that if they receive his message, they will love him for the truth's sake, and he neither expects nor desires their favour upon other terms. By the cross of Christ he is crucified to the world, (Gal. iv. 14,) and the world to him. He has chosen his side. He will serve the Lord, (Joshua xxiv. 25,) and he will use his utmost influence to prevail on others to serve him likewise; so far as he succeeds, he feels a joy superior to the joy of harvest, or of those who divide the spoil, Isa. ix. 3. When he cannot succeed, he is grieved, but not disconcerted; and, for the most part, his calm but steadfast perseverance in well-doing, will gradually establish his character, stop the mouth of calumny, and extort a reverence to his person, even from those who cannot bear his doctrine.

5. I shall mention but one particular more, which, though experience shows to be not so absolutely necessary as those which I have already specified, because, in fact, it has been too little regarded by many who have been wise to win souls, yet is certainly a branch of that wisdom, which, as ministers, we ought incessantly to ask of God—I mean a due attention to the importance of union among those who are engaged in the same cause. A great stress has indeed been often laid upon uniformity of sentiment and modes of worship; but this, in the present state of human nature, can no more be effected either by force or persuasion, than men can be forced or persuaded to a uniformity of stature or complexion; and if it were practicable, it might prove of little value. The form of religion may be strenuously contended for by those who are strangers to the power of it; but the best form we can conceive, if destitute of power, is lifeless, like the body without the soul. The true unity of spirit is derived from the things in which those who are taught and born of God agree, and should not be affected by those in which they differ. The church of Christ, collectively considered, is an army;

they serve under one Prince, have one common interest, and are opposed by the same enemies. This army is kept up, and the places of those who are daily removed to the church triumphant, supplied entirely by those who are rescued and won from the power of the enemy, which is chiefly effected by the gospel-ministry. This consideration should remind ministers, that it is highly improper (I might use a stronger expression) to waste much of their time and talents, which ought to be employed against the common foe, in opposing those, who, though they cannot exactly agree with them in every smaller point, are perfectly agreed, and ready to concur with them, in promoting their principal design. A wise statesman, who has a point much at heart which he cannot carry without assistance, will gladly accept of help from persons of all parties on whom he can prevail to join with him, and will not, at such a crisis, preclude himself from this advantage, by an unseasonable discussion of more minute concerns, in which he knows they must, and will be against him. When I see ministers of acknowledged piety, and respectable abilities, very busy in defending or confuting the smaller differences, which already too much separate those who ought to be of one heart and one mind, though, while they are all fallible, they cannot be exactly of one judgment; though I give them credit for their good intention, I cannot but lament the misapplication of their zeal, which, if directed into another channel, would probably make them much more successful in winning souls. Let us sound an alarm in the enemy's camp, but not in our own! I have somewhere met with a passage of ancient history, the substance of which, though my recollection of it is but imperfect, I will relate, because I think it very applicable to this part of my subject. It is an account of two large bodies of forces which fell in with each other in a dark night. A battle immediately ensued. The attack and resistance were supported with equal spirit. The contest was fierce and bloody. Great was the slaughter on both sides, and on both sides they were on the point of claiming the victory; when the day broke, and as the light advanced, they soon perceived to their astonishment and grief, that owing to the darkness of the night, they had been fighting, not with enemies, as they had supposed, but with friends and allies; they had been doing their enemies' work, and weakening the cause they wished to support. The expectation of each party to conquer the other, was founded upon the losses the opponent had sustained; and this was what proportionably aggravated their lamentation and distress, when they had sufficient light to show them the mischief they had done. Ah! my friends, if shame be compatible with the heavenly state, as perhaps in a sense it may (for believers, when most happy here, are most sensibly ashamed of themselves,) shall we not, even then, be ashamed to think how often, in this dark world, we mistook our friends for foes, and that, while we thought we were fighting for the cause of God and truth, we were wounding and worrying the people whom he loved, and perhaps indulging our own narrow, selfish party prejudices, under the semblance of zeal for his glory!

II. I hope what I have hitherto offered, though more directly addressed to ministers, may not be altogether uninteresting or unuseful to the rest of my auditory; but you who are not in the ministry, if you have tasted that the Lord is gracious, have a desire, in common with us, to win souls. And there is not only ample room and scope for your endeavours, in concert with ours, but without concurrence on your parts, we can expect but little success. You, likewise, if animated by the wisdom which is from above, even those of you who are in the most confined situations, may be greatly instrumental in winning souls.

1. By your example.—If you walk agreeably to your profession, blameless and harmless as the children of God, shining as lights in the world, Phil. ii. 15. When we preach a free salvation by the blood of Jesus, they, who know no better, misrepresent our doctrine, as being unfavourable to the practice of morality, supposing that by the stress we lay upon faith in his atonement, as the only solid ground of hope for acceptance with God, we encourage men to expect to be saved at last whether they obey his commandments or not. We endeavour to convince them of their mistake, and to prove, that as without faith it is impossible to please God, (Heb. xi. 6,) so it is no less impossible for any person to possess true faith, without earnestly endeavouring to please and obey him in all things, from principles of love and gratitude. The proof of this is easy to those who understand the scriptures, and acknowledge their divine authority. But many, yea, most people, are more likely to be convinced by what they observe of you, than by what they hear from us. We assure them that our gospel teaches those who receive it, to renounce all ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly, righteously, and godly; (Tit. ii. 12;) to be temperate in prosperity, patient under affliction; to fill up their several relations in life, with integrity and diligence; to be cheerfully submissive to the will of God under all changes; to be meek, gentle, and benevolent, forbearing and forgiving: in a word, to do, in all cases, to others, as we would they should do unto us, Matt. vii. 12. Happy for us, if when we look round upon our hearers, we can with confidence say, "Ye are our epistles, known and read of all men," 2 Cor. iii. 2. If any ask us concerning the tendency of our doc-

trines, shall we send them to you, that they may notice, not only your serious and constant attendance upon public worship, but the good order of your families, your behaviour as husbands or wives, parents or children, masters or servants, your punctuality in business, and to all your engagements and promises, and the tenderness you discover to the characters and concerns of your neighbours? Shall we send them to you, when you are in trouble, when you are visited with sickness and strong pain, or when the desire of your eyes is taken away with a stroke (Ezek. xxiv. 16,) that they may see with their own eyes and be satisfied that you have neither followed cunningly devised fables, nor contented yourselves with mere lifeless notions of the truth; but that your religion is real and powerful, and not only inspires you with a good hope respecting a future state, but is the source of your comfort, and the spring of your conduct in the present life? may we venture, my friends, to make this appeal? then undoubtedly you are wise to win souls. A profession like yours cannot be without an influence within your own circle. Do any persons, who know your whole deportment, affect to scorn or pity you? if they treat you as hypocrites, they are hypocrites themselves, they are contradicted by their own consciences. I will not say they love you, but be assured they secretly reverence you. It is only the trifling half-professor, who hears the gospel and talks about it, but dishonours it by his practice, whom the world really despise. And who can blame them for despising such characters? But alas for those who, by thus causing the ways of truth to be evil spoken of, lay stumbling-blocks before the blind, Lev. xix. 14.

The effects of a consistent conversation becoming the gospel in those who profess it, were remarkably exemplified in the first Christian church at Jerusalem. They were apparently like sheep without a shepherd, sheep in the midst of wolves. They were surrounded by the very people who had lately murdered their Lord. But the holiness, love, joy, peace, union and simplicity, which animated their conduct, impressed an awe upon the beholders, so that no poor pretender durst presume to join them; (Acts v. 13;) and though divested of all outward advantages and support, the people were constrained to magnify them. Were this spirit more general amongst us, I believe it would be more effectual to stop the mouths of gainsayers, and to silence the cavils of infidels, than all our books and sermons. And the twelve apostles, were they now living amongst us, would probably preach to little purpose, unless a measure of this spirit were discoverable in their professed admirers.

2. By your prayers.—You are not called to preach the gospel, but in this way, you may greatly assist those who are. Brethren, pray for us. Our work is great; the difficulties we have to surmount, the snares and temptations which surround us, and our infirmities, are many. Who is sufficient for these things? The apostle Paul, distinguished as he was by the eminence of his grace, experience, and services, set a high value upon the prayers of God's people. Hear how he pleads with them, with an earnestness, like that of a needy beggar requesting alms: "I beseech you brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that you strive together in your prayers to God for me," Rom. xv. 30. And pray, "That the word of the Lord may have free course, may run and be glorified," 2 Thess. iii. 1. The Lord has promised to do great things for his people, but he has said, that he will be inquired of by them, to do it for them, Ezek. xxxvi. 37. Prize, and improve, your great privilege of access to the throne of grace, by which every believer in Jesus, like Israel of old, has power with God and with man. In answer to effectual fervent prayer, the army of Sennacherib was destroyed in a night, (Isa. xxxvii. 21, 36,) and Peter was delivered from a strong prison and from the malice of Herod, Acts xii. 5, 12. The efficacy of prayer is still the same. If the Lord were pleased to pour out a spirit of prayer and supplication upon his people, we should find our public ordinances more lively and more fruitful. We should then hope to be more successful in winning souls, and you might justly claim a principal share in the comfort and honour of seeing that good work prosper, to the success of which, your prayers would largely contribute. Next to the immediate assistance and consolations of the Holy Spirit, nothing encourages a faithful minister so much, as when he thinks he can perceive that, while he is speaking, his hearers are drawing down a blessing upon his words, by their prayers: it adds wings to his zeal, gives him a double impression upon his own heart, of the weight and importance of the truths he delivers; and enables him to dispense them with a double impression, of demonstration and power, upon the hearts of others.

3. By affording your countenance and assistance, according to the ability the Lord has given you, to promote every prudent and well directed scheme which is set on foot for the more effectual spreading of that knowledge which is necessary in order to win souls, from the dominion of sin, to the service of God. Among these there are few if any, which I can more warrantably commend to your attention, than the laudable and benevolent object of the Society for promoting Religious Knowledge among the Poor,—an institution, which it has pleased

God signally to prosper, both by the large increase of their fund from year to year, and the many instances of the known happy effects which have followed the perusal of the books they have distributed. Many more instances, as yet unknown to us, we trust will be manifested in the great day, when the Lord shall appear in glory. Though the beginning of this Society was small, they have, since the year 1750, when it was first formed, distributed more than four hundred thousand books, upwards of one hundred and five thousand of which were Bibles and New Testaments; the rest were small and plain books, well adapted to the capacities and circumstances of those who have, mostly, but a confined education, and who have not much time for reading. The number of books bestowed annually has been on the increase from year to year. In the course of the last year, according to the printed account, the number of all the different books was fifteen thousand five hundred and eighty. How much these donations may have multiplied the means of religious knowledge among people otherwise destitute, in these kingdoms, in our Plantations, and in America, who can say, who can even conjecture? And we hope, by the benefactions of this year, the Society will be able to do more the following year than in any former.

People who are in danger of perishing for lack of knowledge, are still very numerous. The much which has been done, is little compared with what the Society might yet do were their resources equal to their wishes. I trust my request, that you will strengthen their hands at this time, will not be in vain; and that the brief account I have given you of their design and progress, will render farther solicitation needless. To bespeak the benevolence of my stated congregation, when a collection is proposed, I seldom do more than inform them of the occasion, and that it has my good wishes. After the repeated proofs I have had of their generosity, I need do no more. Nor will I suppose that it is necessary to use any farther arguments to prevail with you.

There may be some persons present, who will kindly assist us in procuring the means of religious knowledge for others, who are, hitherto, unacquainted with the power and the comforts of religion themselves. May the good Lord now awaken their desires to obtain the one thing needful, the pearl of great price! That knowledge which is necessary for the poor is equally so for you, whatever your situation in life may be. Will you pity others, and not feel a concern for your own case? You may deserve thanks from us for your ready assistance in this good work, and yet your heart may be in a state of alienation from God; you may have amiable qualifications, which entitle you to the esteem of your fellow-creatures, as you are members of society, and be at the same time destitute of the faith and hope of the gospel. Permit me, before we part, to offer one consideration to your serious thoughts. We read that eight persons only were saved in the ark, (1 Pet. iii. 20,) and only four of these, Noah and his three sons, were men. Considering the large dimensions of the ark, I think we may take it for granted, that Noah and his sons did not build it without assistance; and there were no men to assist them in escaping from the flood, but such as afterwards perished in it. What an awful case! To afford their help to build an ark for the preservation of others, and then to remain out of the ark themselves, until the flood came and swept them all away. There is a day of wrath approaching. It will burn like an oven; it will ravage like a flood. The gospel points out a refuge. The believer in Jesus Christ, like Noah in the ark, is in perfect safety; he is already delivered from condemnation, and shall stand before the Lord in humble confidence, when he shall come to judge the world. Your concurrence in this charitable design of distributing Bibles among the poor, that they may be timely warned to flee from the wrath to come is commendable:—thus you assist in preparing an ark for them; the very book or books which your money will purchase, may be blessed to the saving of souls, and consequently you may be the instrument. Can you bear the thought of being instrumental to the salvation of others, and to lose your own soul, and be yourself a cast-away at last, after all the means and opportunites you have been favoured with, after all the warnings and calls you have had, after all the good you may have done as a member of society? Alas! is it possible that you can believe there is a flood coming, and that an ark is prepared, and not flee, instantly flee, for refuge to the hope set before you? O may the Lord make you truly wise, and effectually win your soul to himself!

Brethren, the wisdom spoken of in my text is very different from the wisdom of this world, which knows not God. But the scripture cannot be broken; let us therefore abide by the sure decision of that word which cannot deceive or disappoint us. They are truly wise, who are wise to win souls; and though they may be now obscured by misrepresentations and reproaches, they shall shine, ere long, as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever, Dan. xii. 13.

THE GREAT ADVENT;

A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH,

ON THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 1789.

THE DAY OF GENERAL THANKSGIVING FOR THE KING'S HAPPY RECOVERY.

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.—1 Thess. iv. 16, 17.

Our beloved king is now on his way, amidst the acclamations of an affectionate people, to St. Paul's Cathedral: there he will, this day, make his public acknowledgment to God, who heard his prayer in the time of his trouble. It will be a joyful sight to thousands; and, perhaps, there is not a person in this assembly who has not felt a desire to be one of the spectators. But I am glad to meet you here. Many of you, I doubt not, earnestly and repeatedly prayed for the recovery of our gracious Sovereign; and you judge with me, that the most proper expression of our gratitude and joy, is to unite in rendering praise to God upon the very spot where we have often presented our united prayers. And I infer, from the largeness of the congregation, that few who statedly worship with us are now absent, those excepted, who, residing in or near the line of procession, could not attend with propriety, nor perhaps with safety.

If he in whose name we are met shall be pleased (as his word encourages us to hope) to favour us with the influence of his Holy Spirit, and to enable us, in the exercise of that faith which gives subsistence and evidence to things as yet future and unseen, to realize the subject of my text to our minds, we shall have no reason to regret our coming together upon this occasion.

The immediate design of the apostle, in these words, is to comfort believers under a trial, which some of you, perhaps, feel at this hour, and to which any of us may be called sooner than we are aware, the removal of our christian friends or relatives, with whom we have often taken sweet counsel, to a better world. Such a stroke, whenever it takes place, will awaken painful sensations, which he who knows our frame does not condemn. The tendency of the gospel is to moderate and regulate, but not to stifle or eradicate the feelings of humanity. We may sorrow, but provision is made that we should not sorrow like those who have no hope; "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord," Rev. xiv. 13. It is but a temporary separation; we shall see them again to unspeakable advantage. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so they also that sleep in Jesus shall God bring with him." The change of expression here is observable, *Jesus died.* Death to him, was death indeed; death in all its horrors; but he died for his people, to disarm death of its sting, to throw a light upon the dark passage to the grave, and to open the kingdom of heaven to all believers. For now they that believe in him shall never die, John xi. 26. He so dispels their fears, and enlivens their hopes, that to them death is no more than a sleep; they sleep in Jesus and are blessed. And when he who is their life shall appear, as he certainly will, and every eye shall see him, they also shall appear with him in glory, Col. iii. 4. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first."

But I think I am warranted to consider the text in a more general view, and to accommodate it to the happy event which demands our especial thankfulness and praise on this day. Let our thoughts rise from the King's splendid, though solemn procession to St. Paul's, to contemplate that great advent of the King of kings, the idea of which

filled and fired the apostle's thoughts, Rev. i. 7. Behold! he cometh in the clouds! He cometh in his own glory, in the glory of his Father, with all his angels, and with all his saints! Matt. xxv. 31; 1 Thess. iii. 12.

If I attempt to illustrate the procession (so to speak) of that great day, for which all other days were made, by the most striking circumstances of the present day, it will, indeed, be comparing great things with small. In some respects comparison will utterly fail, and I must have recourse to contrast. For what proportion can there be between finite and infinite, between the most important concerns of time, and those of eternity?

Let us, however, aim to fix our feeble conceptions upon the Personage whose approach is here announced; upon the manner of his coming; upon his train of attendants, and upon the final event of his appearance, with which the scene will close.

The Lord himself shall descend.—At another time, if both houses of parliament, the judges, the foreign ministers, the principal part of the nobility, and persons of distinction in the nation, were to assemble in St. Paul's, their presence would form a grand and affecting spectacle. But upon this occasion, though they should be all there, if the King was not seen among them, it is probable they would be all in a manner overlooked, and disappointment and anxiety would mark the countenance of every beholder. But it is more than probable, it is absolutely certain, that if all the glories of the invisible world were to open upon the view of those who feel their obligations to the great Redeemer, they could not be completely happy, unless they were permitted to behold his glory. He has stipulated on their behalf, "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, should be with me where I am;" (John xvii. 24;) and by his grace, he qualifies them for their high privilege, so that even now they can say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee! and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee," Psalm lxxiii. 25. Jesus is the light, the life, the sun of the soul that knows him, according to the revelation given in the scriptures of his person, offices, and grace. And, as the most magnificent palace would be but a dungeon, if it had no apertures to admit the light, so the whole creation would be dark and dreary to his people, were it possible that they could be excluded from his presence.

In this life, they can know but little of the particulars of that happiness which God has prepared for them that love him; but in general they know, and this suffices them, that they shall see him as he is, (1 John iii. 2,) and shall be like him, and with him. They love him unseen; and, while he is yet absent from them, the expectation, founded upon his own gracious promise, that he will shortly descend himself, to receive them, and to avow them for his own, before the assembled world, is the food and joy of their hearts, which soothes their sorrows, and animates them under every difficulty they are exposed to, at present, for his sake.

Oh! the solemnity, the terrors, and the glories of that approaching day! Then, they who have slighted his mercy, and abused his patience and forbearance, will tremble. Then many whom the world has admired or envied; many of "the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the chief captains and the mighty men, shall call (alas! in vain) to the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and hide them from his presence," Rev. vi. 15, 16. But they who love him, and long for his appearance, will say, "Lo! this is our God, we have waited for him; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation," Isa. xxv. 9. May we, my brethren, have grace "to use all diligence, that we may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless," 2 Pet. iii. 14.

Should we be asked, Why does every face express an air of satisfaction to-day? Why is the feeling of our own personal trials in a degree suspended? Why does the public appearance of the King diffuse so general a joy among his loyal subjects? We can give a ready answer; We love our King. Few of us, indeed, are personally known to him. The blessing of being under a good King, can only be known to the bulk of a nation, by the influence of his administration upon the public welfare. This influence we have felt. It is true, we were too little sensible of it, too little thankful for it, until an alarming dispensation awakened our fears, lest we should lose the privileges we had not sufficiently prized; but then each man would remind himself, how highly favoured we had been, as a people, for many years, under his government; then, we understood our great obligations to the King, as the minister of God to us for good. We were sitting peaceably under our own vines and fig-trees, highly distinguished among the nations by our civil and religious liberty, our prosperity at home, and our reputation abroad. The news of the King's illness, therefore, not only awakened our apprehensions, but revived our gratitude; and from the same principle, we now rejoice in his recovery.

Again, because we loved him, we sympathized with him. We were afflicted by his affliction. We not only considered him as a King, but we felt for him as a man, a husband, and a father. Such an instance of the dependent, precarious state of human life; such a proof, that no rank or situation is exempted from a share in the calamities which sin has brought into the world, impressed us with compassion, blended with awe. And not our compassion only, but our prayers were engaged for the King, the Queen, and

Royal Family. I am persuaded many persons could scarcely have prayed more earnestly had it been their own private and domestic concern. Our prayers have been heard, and signally answered, therefore we rejoice and give thanks to-day. We wish not to detract from the skill of physicians, they have been employed, and owned as instruments of the merciful will of God; but we ascribe the praise for a recovery, so little hoped for, and so critically seasonable, to him who raiseth the dead, who speaks and it is done.

And we rejoice in expectation. Indeed in this view we may, and should, "rejoice with trembling," Ps. ii. 11. How much may depend upon this single, this precious life, we know not; neither do we know what might have been the consequences, if the rumour, at which we once shuddered, and which, for some hours, was generally believed, that God had taken him from us, had proved true.

Let us praise God, who has preserved us from knowing them. But the manner in which we have been relieved encourages us both to pray and to hope, that our King is an object of God's especial care, and that he will live (long may he live!) to communicate still greater benefits to the nation, as the patron of true religion, the guardian of our constitution, and an exemplar of piety and virtue to his subjects. That God may give him to reign in the hearts of an enlightened, free, and affectionate people, and not to permit any device or weapon formed against him, to prosper.

For similar reasons, but vastly superior in importance, even as the heavens are higher than the earth, we rejoice in the assurance and prospect, that the Lord himself will descend. He is the good Shepherd, who laid down his life for the sheep, (John x. 11;) and, therefore, they who know his name, and trust in him for salvation, are bound to him by the strongest ties of attachment and gratitude. They admire his condescension and his love. To his mediation and care they are indebted for their life and hopes. They remember what they were doing, and how carelessly they were sporting in the path that leadeth to destruction, when he first stopped them, turned them, and led them into his fold. He is, even now, their sun and shield, their wisdom and strength; on him they cast their cares, from him they receive their supplies; therefore they love him, though unseen, (2 Pet. i. 8;) and rejoice in the hope of his appearance.

They know that he who will descend to receive them, was once a man of sorrows, and a companion of grief. And though this too little affected them in the time of their ignorance, it has been otherwise since they have derived life from his death, and healing from his wounds. They have sympathized with him in the agonies which he endured in Gethsemane, and upon Mount Golgotha. They remember that his face was defiled with spitting, his head crowned with thorns, his back torn by scourges, his hands and feet pierced with spikes; that he made his soul an offering for their sins, and was crucified for their sakes. Thus he loved them, and gave himself for them, Gal. ii. 10. Thus he delivered them from approaching wrath; and this love has won their hearts. And they are waiting for his return from heaven, (1 Thess. i. 8;) that when they shall see him as he is, with all his angels, and with all his saints, they may join in nobler strains than they can at present reach, in songs of praise to him who redeemed them to God by his own blood.

But though they have much to praise him for in this life, they have much more to expect when he shall descend. Their privileges are great, while here. They are already delivered from guilt and condemnation, they have access by him to a throne of grace, they have fellowship with him by faith, and joys which a stranger intermeddles not with—but it does not yet appear what they shall be, 1 John iii. 2. They are still in a state of warfare and trial; they are exposed to many troubles, to reproach, opposition, and temptation; they are still straitened and hindered, in their best attempts and desires, by an indwelling principle of evil. They are sowing in tears, (Ps. cxxvi. 5,) but when their Lord shall descend, they expect to reap with joy. He is coming to wipe away all their tears, and then they are assured they shall weep no more. The days of their mourning shall cease for ever. He has prepared for them a kingdom, "incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away," 1 Pet. i. 4. In that kingdom they shall shine forth, each like the sun in the firmament (Matt. xiii. 43,) an immense constellation of suns!

The manner in which the Lord will descend can be but faintly illustrated by any circumstances borrowed from the pomp of this day. When the King enters St. Paul's, his arrival will be announced by the voice of the multitude, the discharge of cannon, and the deep-mouthed organ. But what are these when compared with the voice of the Archangel, the shout of all who love his appearance, and that trump of God, which will shake the creation, and raise the dead? Perhaps by the word *Archangel*, in this connection, we may understand, the Lord of angels, the King himself. "He shall call to the heaven from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people," Ps. l. 4. The hour cometh, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God," John v. 25. The *shout* seems a military term. By a shout soldiers encourage each other in the onset to battle; and there is a triumphant shout of victory

when the enemy is utterly defeated. Such will be the shout when the Lord shall descend—His soldiers, who, fighting in his cause, have often endured hardship, and have sometimes lost a skirmish, shall, on the great day of decision, in the final event of the war, stand forth more than conquerors, through him that loved them, Rom. viii. 37. Their shout shall proclaim his praise: for they got not the victory by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them, Ps. xliv. 3. The Lord leads them on, teaches them to fight, clothes them with complete armour, and supplies them with strength. He himself subdues their foes—and when he shall descend with glory, he will terminate the contest. His people will then utter a universal shout, and shall hear the noise of war no more.

When the Lord descended upon Mount Sinai, the trumpet of God was heard exceeding loud, (Exod. xix. 16—19;) it waxed louder and louder, the people trembled, and Moses spoke. The apostle records his words. Even Moses, the favoured servant of God, said, "I exceedingly fear and quake," Heb. xii. 21. But the sound of the last trump, when the Lord shall descend again, will be much louder, and the effects much more important and extensive. It will be heard, not only in the neighbourhood of one mountain, but from east to west, from pole to pole; not only by the living, but by the dead; by all who ever lived.

Then, at his great command, they that dwell in the dust shall awake, Is. xxvi. 19. The earth and the sea shall deliver up their dead. There will be a resurrection both of the just and the unjust. Some shall arise "to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt," Dan. xii. 2.

The joy, this day, for the recovery and appearance of our King, is general, I hope universal. I hope there are few persons in the kingdom who do not cordially share in it. However, if contrary sensations do exist, they are suppressed and concealed. But the great King has borne with many avowed enemies, and with many traitors disguised under the profession of his name from age to age. He will not bear with them always. He knows them all, and not one of them can escape his notice. To them the language of the trump will be, Arise, and come to judgment! My heart is pained to think, that possibly, some of this description may be now present in our assembly. Yet I am glad you are here, that I may warn you to flee from the wrath to come. What a dreadful day will it be, when you, if unhumbled, unpardoned, unsanctified, as you now are, shall be compelled to stand before his tribunal! For we are assured, that when he returns to bless his willing people, he will summon his enemies, who would not that he should reign over them, Luke xix. 27. He will place them at his left hand, and denounce that awful sentence upon them, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire," Matt. xxv. 41. As yet he is upon a mercy-seat. Oh! seek him while he may be found; call upon him while he is near! Isa. lv. 6. There is forgiveness with him. Humble yourselves before him, and entreat for mercy. Entreat him to show you who he is, and what he has done for sinners; that you may believe and be saved. Otherwise you must stand before his judgment-seat. Then his wrath will burn like fire.

But it is of the dead in Christ, I am chiefly to speak. These shall rise first, and together with those his servants who shall be living at his coming, shall be caught up to meet him in the air. There are expressions in scripture which intimate, that the servants of the Lord Christ, shall have the honour of being in some manner beyond our feeble apprehension, assessors with their Lord in the day of judgment, Luke xxii. 30; 1 Cor. vi. 3. They will witness and approve his proceedings. In this state of infirmity, it becomes them, and is their duty, to pity and pray for the wicked; and to use all their influence to persuade them to pity themselves, to forsake their evil ways, that they may live. But in the great and terrible day, when the wicked shall be turned into hell, the righteous will be so perfectly impressed with the justice and holiness of the sentence of condemnation, that they will not hesitate to say, "Amen—So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord!" Judges v. 31.

But the apostle, using the language of prophecy, which speaks of the future as though it were actually present, says farther, "Then we that are alive, and remain, shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air." Not, as I apprehend, that he expected to be living when the Lord shall descend; by the word *we*, he expresses his joint relation with the many members, which constitute the one body, of which the Lord Christ is the head. Of these, there will be some living when he shall appear. And of these he says elsewhere, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump," 1 Cor. xv. 52.—They will not suffer that separation of soul and body which we call *death*. But as mortal flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, he will change their vile bodies, according to the pattern of his glorious body, (Phil. iii. 21,) and they, like Enoch and Elijah of old, shall ascend, together with those who are raised from the dead, to meet him in the air.

These will constitute his train. The redeemed from the earth; they who lived and died in the faith of his name, through a course of successive generations; and they who shall be alive at his coming, shall be all col

lected together, and prepared to welcome him.

Of the numbers who will rejoice to see the King to day, many, though loyal subjects, will only behold him at a distance; and the far greater part of his people will not behold him at all. Few but the nobility and principal persons can gain admission into the church; though the crowds in the street will participate in the general satisfaction. Could we suppose, that instead of the common people, the streets were filled, and the windows lined by the great, that all the sovereigns, potentates, and illustrious personages in Europe, were assembled to be spectators of the joyful event which now calls for our thanksgivings; splendid as the concourse might appear in the eyes of men, they would be unspeakably inferior, in rank and dignity, to those who shall meet the Lord. Not one of his people will be absent; and however poor and unnoticed many of them once were, they will then, every one, be greater than the kings of the earth. They will all claim the title, and the claim will be allowed, of sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, 2 Cor. vi. 18. They will all possess that honour which cometh of God only, John v. 44. The glorious company of apostles, the goodly fellowship of prophets, the noble army of martyrs, will march in the procession; and besides these, an exceeding great multitude which no man can number, whose exultation and happiness are but imperfectly represented to us by images borrowed from the things which are deemed most valuable and honourable amongst men. They are said (Rev. iv. 10; vii. 9,) to be clothed with white robes, to have crowns upon their heads, to be furnished with harps, and to bear palms (the emblem of victory) in their hands.

"Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," Luke xii. 32. May grace preserve you from being ashamed of your Lord now, and you will not be ashamed of him nor will he be ashamed of you, when he shall come to judge the world, Matt. x. 32; Mark. viii. 38.

When all mankind shall be ranged before this great Judge, he will own and vindicate his people in the presence of assembled worlds, and pass an irrevocable sentence of exclusion and condemnation upon his enemies; and then, he will say to those on his right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you," (Matt. xxv. 34,) then, he will present them before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy; (Jude 24;) then time shall be no more; (Rev. x. 6;) they will no longer measure their existence by the revolutions of the sun and the moon; they will enter upon an eternal state. With this event the apostle closes the description in my text. Here he stops; the rest is too great for language to express, or thought to conceive. He can only say, "and so we shall for ever be with the Lord." Who can expound this sentence? We must leave this world, and be admitted into the inheritance of the saints in light, before we can fully understand the import of these few words.

We shall be with the Lord.—There is no doubt, that if the power of our King was equal to the benevolence of his heart, he would willingly make all who shall see him to-day, yea, all his subjects, in every part of his dominions, completely happy. But can he take them all with him to court? Can he treat them all as his own children? Can he invest them all with dignities and possessions equal to the largest desires of their hearts? Could we, for a moment, conceive it possible for an earthly king to do thus, still it would afford but a very faint illustration of our subject. The highest effects of his favour would be precarious and transient, confined to the term of a short life, and in their nature, incapable of answering the instinctive appetite of the soul of man, formed for immortality, and endued with a capacity for good, which nothing less than being with the Lord can satisfy.

When Peter saw his Saviour transfigured upon the mount, a glance of his glory instantly fixed and filled his mind. He forgot all inferior attachments, and said, "It is good to be here," Matt. xvii. 4. He would have been glad to build tabernacles upon the mount, and to return to the world no more. He knew not indeed what he said; there was much for him yet to do and to suffer for his Master: but he well knew why he said it; and all who are partakers of the grace of God are like minded with Peter. And though at present they walk by faith, and not by sight, (2 Cor. v. 7,) they are sometimes favoured with seasons of refreshment, with golden hours, when according to his gracious promise he manifests himself unto them, as he does not unto the world, (John xiv. 22,) and causes his goodness to pass before them; then, for the time, they are raised above both the cares and the comforts of this world, and could be glad to remain with him. But, like Peter, they must return to fill up the duties of their situation in life, till his appointed hour of dismission. However, these foretastes convince them, that they cannot be properly happy till they are with him in his kingdom, where nothing will conceal him for a moment from their view.

Their nearest approaches to him now, are likewise subject to abatements. Something from within or from without still occurs to interrupt, and too often to suspend their joys. Their communion with him is indistinct, through the medium of ordinances, and a

vail of flesh and blood. This vail hinders them, not only as it is polluted, but as it is weak, and subject to many infirmities. We cannot see him, as yet, and live, Exod. xxxiii. 20. If he did not accommodate the discoveries of himself to the frailty of our nature, we should be overpowered. The beloved disciple had often conversed familiarly with his Lord, and reclined on his bosom, during his state of humiliation: but when he appeared in the isle of Patmos, though his majesty was attempered with mildness and love, and his design was to honour and comfort him, he says, "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead," Rev. i. 17.

Further, pain, indisposition, and trouble, often distract their attention, or detain them from the opportunities in which he has promised to meet his people. They are glad when it is said unto them, "Let us go up to the house of the Lord;" (Ps. cxxii. 1;) but they are frequently shut up, and cannot come forth; (Ps. lxxxviii. 8;) and though he supports them under all their afflictions, yet it is no small trial to be confined from his ordinances. But when they shall meet their Lord in the air, they will be freed from every defect, defilement, and impediment. They will see him as he is, without any interposing vail or cloud. They will be out of the reach of sin, temptation, pain, and grief. They are blessed now, though often called to mourn, because they will then be comforted, Matt. v. 8.

Again, we shall be for ever with the Lord.—O that word for ever! even to be with the Lord, and to possess a happiness commensurate to the utmost grasp of our capacity; if it were only for a month, or a year, or an age, or a thousand ages—the thought that this happiness must at length have an end, however distant the termination might be, would cast a damp upon the whole enjoyment. But to know that the happiness is eternal, that they who are once with the Lord shall be with him for ever; this is, if I may so speak, the Heaven of Heaven itself. Such honour awaits all the saints: for thus hath the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, already declared: "Him that overcometh, will I make a pillar in the house of my God, and he shall go no more out," Rev. iii. 12. "Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended," Isa. lx. 20.

I hope I have not digressed from the design of this day, by attempting to lead your thoughts to the day of the Lord. I have availed myself of every occasion, which my views of the text have suggested, to impress upon your hearts and my own, a sense of the very great mercy which God, in answer to prayer, has bestowed upon us, by restoring health to the King, and enabling him to pay his public acknowledgment to the Most High, and to revisit his affectionate people. But never are our temporal mercies so sweet, so valuable, nor so likely to be permanent, as when they are thankfully contemplated in immediate connexion with the hand of him by whom kings reign, and who doth what pleaseth him, in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, Dan. iv. 25. Nay, to us, who are soon to pass into an eternal state, the most important concerns of nations and kingdoms are in reality trivial as the sports of children, unless we can acknowledge, trace, approve, and admire, the great and ultimate designs of God, to which all the revolutions that take place in human affairs are subordinate and subservient. His wise, and holy providence ruleth over all; and every movement has either a more remote or a more direct tendency to bring forward the glories of that day, when the Lord himself shall descend to receive his own people, and to execute vengeance upon his adversaries.

Knowing to whom I am preaching, I have not thought it necessary to offer proof, that the God who has restored health to the King, and happiness to the kingdom, is he to whom my text refers: he of whom we say, in our public Liturgy, "We believe that thou shalt come to be our judge." It is the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Word, the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners. We rest in his own declaration, unmoved by all the cavils of those who, alas! know him not, that all things are delivered unto him, all power committed to him, in heaven and in earth, Matt. xi. 27; xxviii. 18. How else could we trust to him for the expiation of our sins, and the salvation of our souls; guilty and helpless as we are in ourselves, and conscious of the snares, difficulties, dangers, and enemies to which we are exposed? The Lord reigneth, Ps. xcix. 1. He is King of saints, King of the nations, King and Lord of the universe. The government is upon his shoulders, Isa. ix. 6. This God is the God we adore, and we now aim to imitate the songs of those with whom we shortly hope to join; "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing," Rev. v. 12.

While I exhort you to rejoice, and join with you in rejoicing, for the late instance of his goodness to the King, to the nation, and to ourselves, I feel the highest pleasure in the thought, that I see many around me, (O that I could hope the same of you all!) to whom I may warrantably say, rejoice on these accounts, but rather, especially, and above all, "Rejoice that your names are written in heaven," (Luke x. 20,) and that the Lord whom you love, who now guides you by his counsel, will shortly descend to receive you to his glory, Ps. lxxiii. 24.

A HYMN OF THANKSGIVING FOR THE KING'S HAPPY RECOVERY.

Man can seldom prize the blessings
Which our gracious God bestows,
In the moment of possessing,
Or return the praise he owes:
But with other eyes he views them
In affliction's threat'ning days;
When he fears lest he should lose them,
Then he trembles, weeps and prays.

II.

Comets, or eclipses wake him,
For a moment fix his eye,
Hurricanes, or earthquakes shake him,
And extort an anxious cry;
While the sun, with gentle motion,
Spreading blessings through the year,
Causes no devout emotion,
Neither gratitude nor fear.

III.

God in mercy to this nation,
Has afforded us a King,
Whose benign administration,
Cheer'd us like the sun in spring.
Truth and liberty were nourished,
By his mild auspicious rays:
Thus in peace, the kingdom flourished;
But our hearts forgot to praise.

IV.

When a dark eclipse succeeded,
Fear a thousand ills surmised;
Then we felt how much we needed
What we had too little prized:
Then we prayed, and since have proved,
Fervent prayer is not in vain:
Prayer the dark eclipse removed,
And our sun shines bright again.

V.

Lord! to thee, the great Physician,
We our hearts and voices raise!
Thou didst answer our petition,
Now accept our humble praise!
Bless our King, Almighty Saviour!
May he long the sceptre wield,
For our good and with thy favour,
Thou his Wisdom, Strength, and Shield.

THE IMMINENT DANGER AND ONLY SURE RESOURCE OF THIS NATION;

A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH,

ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 1794.

THE DAY APPOINTED FOR A GENERAL FAST.

Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not.—Jonah iii. 9.

How great is the power of God over the hearts of men! Nineveh was the capital of a powerful empire. The inhabitants were heathens. The many prophets who, during a long series of years, had spoken in the name of the Lord to his professed people of Judah and Israel, had spoken almost in vain. The messengers were often mocked, and their message despised. The inhabitants of Nineveh, it is probable, had never seen a true prophet till Jonah was sent to them. If they had reasoned on his prediction, they might have thought it very improbable, that a great city, the head of a great kingdom, and in a time of peace, could be in danger of an overthrow within forty days. But it is said, in verse 5, "They believed God." The awful denunciation made a general, a universal impression. The king arose from his throne, laid aside his robes, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. A sudden cessation, of business and of pleasure, took place; he proclaimed a strict fast, the rigour of which was extended even to the cattle. His subjects readily complied, and unanimously concurred in crying for mercy, though they had no encouragement but a peradventure: "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?"

It appears from this, and other passages of scripture, that the most express declarations of God's displeasure against sinners, still afford ground and room for repentance. Thus in the prophecy of Ezekiel; (chap. xxxiii. 14, 15;) "When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die:" and again, in the prophecy of Jeremiah, (chap. xviii. 7, 8,) "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom to destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." The Lord God speaks to us by his word, in plain and popular language. He condescends to our feeble apprehensions. God cannot repent, he is of one mind, who can turn him? Numb. xxiii. 19; Job xxiii. 13. Yet when afflictive providences lead men to a sense of their sins, to an acknowledgement of their demerits, and excite a spirit of humiliation, repentance and prayer, he often mercifully changes his dispensations, and averts from them the impending evil. Such was the effect of Jonah's message to the Ninevites. The people humbled themselves, and repented of their wickedness; and God suspended the execution of the sentence which he had pronounced against them.

My brethren, may we not fear, that the men of Nineveh will rise up in judgment against us, (Matt. xii. 41,) and condemn us, if we do not imitate their example, and humble ourselves before God? They repented at the preaching of Jonah, and immediately, on their first hearing him: and they sought for mercy upon a peradventure, when they could say no more than, Who can tell, whether there may be the least room to hope for it, after what the prophet has so solemnly declared?

God does not speak to us by the audible voice of an inspired prophet, nor is it necessary. We know, or may know from his written word, that it shall be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked, Is. iii. 10, 11. The appearance of an angel from heaven could add nothing to the certainty of the de-

clarations he has already put into our hands. He has likewise raised up, and perpetuated a sueeession of his ministers, to enforce the warnings he has given us in the seripture; to remind us of our sins, and the sure and dreadful consequenees, if we persist in them. Nor are we left at an uncertainty as to the event, if we humbly eonfess them, and implore forgiveness, in the way whieh he has prescribed. The gospel, the glorious gospel of the blessed God, is preached unto us. Jesus Christ, as erueified, is set forth among us, Gal. iii. 1. His blood eleanseth from all sin; (1 John i. 7;) and they who believe in him are freed from condemnation, and completely justified, Rom. viii. 1; Aets xiii. 39. They have also free aecess to a throne of graee, and like Israel they have power by prayer to prevail with God and with man, Gen. xxxii. 28. And shall it be said of any of us, that the Lord gave us space to repent, and invited us to repentance, and we repented not? Rev. ii. 21. May his mercy forbid it!

He now speaks to us by his providenee. His judgments are abroad in the earth; and it behoves us to learn righteousness. His hand is lifted up, and if any are so careless, or obstinate, that they will not see, yet sooner or later, they must, they shall see, Isa. xxvi. 9, 11. The great God has a controversy with the potsherds of the earth. The point to be decided between him, and many abroad, and, I fear, too many at home is, whether he be the governor of the earth or not? His own people, to whom his name and glory are dear, will hold all inferior concernments in subordination to this. If there be no other alternative, misery and havoc must spread, men must perish by millions, yea, the frame of nature must be dissolved, rather than God be dishonoured and defied with impunity. But he will surely plead and gain his own eause; and either in a way of judgment or of mercy all men shall know, that he is the Lord. I believe there is no expression in the Old Testament so frequently repeated as this, Ye, or They shall know that I am the Lord, "Hath he said it, and shall he not make it good?" Ezekiel *passim.*

The rivers of human blood, and all the ealamities and horror which overspread a great part of the continent, the distant report of which is suffieient to make our ears tingle, are all to be ascribed to this eause. God is not acknowledged, yea, in some places, he has been formally disowned and renounced. Therefore men are left to themselves, their furious passions are unchained, and they are given up, without restraint, to the way of their own hearts. A more dreadful judgment than this eannot be inflicted on this side of hell.

And though we are still favoured with peace at home, the dreadful storm is at no great distance; it seems moving our way, and we have reason to fear it may burst upon us. But I would be thankful for the appointment of this day; for I should think the prospect dark indeed, if I did not rely on the Lord's gracious attention to the united prayers of those who fear and trust him, and who know it is equally easy to him either to save or to destroy, by many or by few, 1 Sam. xiv. 6. Our fleets and armies may be well appointed and well eommanded; but without his blessing upon our eouneils and enterprises, they will be unable to defend us. He ean take wisdom from the wise, and courage from the bold, in the moment when they are most needful. He can disable our forces by sickness or dissension. And by his mighty wind, he ean dash our ships to pieces against the rocks, against each other, or sink them as lead in the mighty waters. Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, if the Lord eommandeth not? Lam. iii. 37.

Our Lord and Saviour, when speaking of the eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell and slew them, said to the Jews, "Think ye that these men were sinners above all that dwelt in Jerusalem, beeause they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but except you repent ye shall all likewise perish," Luke xiii. 4. May the application of these words sink deeply into our hearts! It will not beeome us to say, either to God or man, that we have indeed sinned, but there are greater sinners than ourselves. It is true the French Convention, and many others who are infatuated by the same spirit, have exeeeded the ordinary standard of human impiety and eruelty. But I hope there are multitudes in that nation, who, though they are overawed by the oppressors, and dare not speak their sentiments, yet are mourning in seereey and silence for the abominations which they cannot prevent. But the Freneh have not sinned against sueh advantages as we possess. They were long the slaves of arbitrary power, and the dupes of superstition, and of late they have been the dupes of madmen, assuming the name of philosophers. We, on the contrary, were born and edueated in a land distinguished from all the nations of the earth by the eminent degree in which we enjoy civil and religious liberty, and the light of gospel truth. These privileges exeeedingly aggravate our sins; and no just eomparison, in this respect, can be formed between us and other nations, until we can find a people who have been equally favoured, and for an equal spaee of time, by the providence of God, and have likewise equalled us in disobedience and ingratitude.

The most dreadful enormities committed in France, are no more than specimens of what human depravity is capable, when circumstances admit of its full exertion, and when the usual boundaries and restrictions neeessary to the peaee and welfare of eivil

society are judicially removed. The influence of daring infidelity and profligate example, aided by the peculiar state of their public affairs, have broken, in many instances, the strongest ties of social and relative life, and extinguished the common feelings of humanity.

Yet the unhappy French, though our inveterate enemies, are not the proper objects of our hatred or our scorn, but rather of our pity. They know not what they do. Let us pray for them. Who can tell but God, to whom all things are possible, and whose mercies are higher than the heavens, may give them also repentance? And let us pray for ourselves, that we may be instructed and warned by their history; for by nature, we are no better than they.

I. But it is time to attend more immediately to our own concerns. The professed purpose of our meeting to-day, is to humble ourselves before Almighty God, and to send up our prayers and supplications to the Divine Majesty, for obtaining pardon of our sins, and for averting those heavy judgments which our manifold provocations have most justly deserved, and imploring his blessing and assistance on the arms of his Majesty by sea and land, and for restoring and perpetuating peace, safety, and prosperity to himself and to his kingdoms.* I hope these expressions accord with the language and desire of our hearts.

And now—O for a glance of what Isaiah saw, and has described, in chap. vi.! O that we, by the power of that faith which is the evidence of things unseen, could behold the glory of the Lord filling this house; that we could realize the presence, and the attitude of their attendant angels! They cover their faces and their feet with their wings, as overpowered by the beams of his majesty, and conscious, if not of defilement like us, yet of unavoidable inability as creatures, to render him the whole of that praise and homage which are justly due to him. O that by faith, we could enter into the spirit of their ascription, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is filled with his glory! If we were all thus affected, as the prophet was, surely each one for himself would adopt the prophet's language. Or if a comfortable hope in the gospel prevented us from crying out, Wo is me, I am undone! —we should at least say (the Hebrew word might be so rendered,) I am silenced, I am struck dumb! I am overwhelmed with confusion and shame; for I am a man of unclean lips myself, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

If we have a degree of this impression, we shall not be at leisure to perplex ourselves concerning men or measures, the second causes, or immediate instruments of our calamities. The evil of sin contrasted with the holiness and glory of God, will engross our thoughts. And we shall ascribe all the troubles we either feel or fear, to our own sins, and the sins of those among whom we dwell.

1. Let us first look at home. I am a man of unclean lips. I am a sinner. This confession suits us all, and is readily made by all who know themselves. A person approaching London from the neighbouring hills, usually sees it obscured by a cloud of smoke. This cloud is the aggregate of the smoke, to which every house furnishes its respective quota. It is no unfit emblem of the sin and the misery which abound in this great metropolis. The Lord said of the Amorites, at a certain period, Their iniquity is not yet full: (Gen. xv. 16;) I hope the measure of our iniquity is not yet full; but it is filling every day, and we are all daily contributing to fill it. True believers, though by grace delivered from the reigning power of sin, (Rom. vi. 14,) are still sinners. In many things we offend all, in thought, word, and deed. We are now called upon to humble ourselves before God, for the sins of our ignorance, and for the more aggravated sins we have committed against light, and experience—for those personal sins, the record of which is only known to God and our own consciences—for the defects and defilements of our best services—for our great and manifold failures in the discharge of our relative duties, as parents, children, husbands, wives, masters, or servants, and as members of the community. Our dulness in the ways of God, our alertness in the pursuit of our own will and way; our indifference to what concerns his glory, compared with the quickness of our apprehensions when our own temporal interests are affected,—are so many proofs of our ingratitude and depravity. The sins of the Lord's own people are so many, and so heightened by the consideration of his known goodness, that if he was to enter into judgment with them only, they could offer no other plea than that which he has mercifully provided for them; "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who could stand? but there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayst be feared," Ps. cxxx. 3, 4.

2. It is easy to declaim against the wickedness of the times. But only they who are duly affected with the multitude and magnitude of their own sins, can be competent judges of what the prophet meant, or felt, when he said, I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. We ought to be no less concerned (though in a different manner) for the sins of those among whom we dwell, than for our own. We shall be so, if with the eyes of our mind, we behold the King, the Lord of hosts; because his glory, which should be

* Title-page of the appointed form of prayer.

the dearest object to our hearts, is dishonoured by them.

I think this nation may be considered as the Israel of the New Testament, both with respect of his goodness to us, and our perverse returns to him.—He has been pleased to select us, as a peculiar people, and to show amongst us, such instances of his protection, his favour, his grace, and his patience, as cannot be paralleled in the annals of any other nation.

We have no certain account when the name of Jesus the Saviour was first known in this island; it was probably at an early period of the Christian æra. But we do know, that after the long dark night of superstition and ignorance which covered Christendom for many ages, the dawn of returning gospel light was first seen amongst us. From the time of Wickliff, the morning-star of the Reformation, the true gospel has been known, preached, received, and perpetuated to this day. There have been times when they who loved this gospel have suffered for it. They were preserved faithful, in defiance of stripes, fines, imprisonment, and death itself. But those times are past. We enjoy not only light, but liberty, and the rights of conscience and private judgment, in a degree till of late unknown.

We have likewise been long favoured with peace, though often principals in wars, which have been very calamitous, both to our enemies, and to the nations which have taken part in our affairs. Our intestine broils at different times have contributed to form and establish our present happy constitution. We breathe the air of civil liberty. Our insular situation, and naval force, by the blessing of God, have preserved us from foreign invasions; and when such have been attempted, the winds and seas have often fought our battles. Our wide-spreading and flourishing commerce has raised us to a pitch of opulence, which excites the admiration and envy of other nations.—Great Britain and Ireland appear but as small spots upon a globe or map; but our interests and influence extend, in every direction, to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Will not the Lord's words to Israel apply with equal propriety to us? What could have been done to my vineyard, that I have not done? Wherefore, when I looked for grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? Isa. v. 4.

How is the blessed gospel improved among us? This would be a heavy day to me, if I did not believe, and know, that there are those among our various denominations, who prize and adorn it. If these could be all assembled in one place, I hope they would be found a very considerable number: and for their sakes, and in answer to their prayers, I humbly trust that mercy will still be afforded to us. But compared with the multitudes who reject, despise, or dishonour it, I fear they are very few. Too many hate it with a bitter hatred, and exert all their influence to oppose and suppress it. The great doctrines of the Reformation are treated with contempt; and both they who preach, and they who espouse them, are considered as visionaries or hypocrites, knaves or fools. The gospel of God is shunned as a pestilence, or complained of as a burden, almost wherever it is known.

Wisdom is indeed justified of all her children, Luke vii. 35. The gospel is the power of God to the salvation of them that believe, Rom. i. 16. It recalls them from error, from wickedness, and from misery, guides their feet into the ways of peace, and teaches them to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world, Titus ii. 12. But in the number of those who profess to receive it, there are too many who confirm and increase the prejudices of those who speak against what they know not.—Alas! what extravagant opinions, what fierce dissensions, what loose conversations, what open offences, may be found amongst many who would be thought professors of that gospel which only breathes the spirit of holiness, love, and peace!

What then must be the state of those who avowedly live without God in the world? I need not enlarge upon this painful subject, which forces itself upon the mind, if we only walk the streets, or look into the newspapers. It is not necessary to inform my hearers that infidelity, licentiousness, perjury, profaneness, the neglect and contempt of God's sabbaths, and worship, abound. The laws of God, and the laws of the land, so far as their object is to enforce the observance of his commands, are openly and customarily violated in every rank of life. In a day when the Lord of hosts calls to weeping and mourning, thoughtless security, dissipation, and riot, are the characteristics of our national spirit, Is. xxii. 12, 13. The loss of public spirit, and that impatience of subordination, so generally observable, so widely diffused, which are the consequences of our sins against God, are, in themselves, moral causes sufficient to ruin the nation, unless his mercy interposes in our behalf.

I should be inexcusable, considering the share I have formerly had in that unhappy business, if, upon this occasion, I should omit to mention the African slave-trade. I do not rank this amongst our national sins; because I hope and believe, a very great majority of the nation, earnestly long for its suppression. But, hitherto, petty and partial interests prevail against the voice of justice, humanity, and truth. This enormity, however, is not sufficiently laid to heart. If you are justly shocked by what you hear of the cruelties practised in France, you would perhaps be shocked much more, if you could fully con-

ceive of the evils and miseries inseparable from this traffic, which, I apprehend, not from hearsay, but from my own observation, are equal in atrocity, and perhaps superior in number, in the course of a single year, to any or all the worst actions which have been known in France since the commencement of their revolution. There is a cry of blood against us; a cry accumulated by the accession of fresh victims, of thousands, of scores of thousands, I had almost said of hundreds of thousands, from year to year.

It is but a brief and faint outline I have attempted to give of the present state of this nation, in the sight of Almighty God, and of the sins for which we are this day assembled to humble ourselves before him.

II. Have we not therefore cause to say, with the Ninevites, Who can tell?—Is it not a peradventure? Is there more than a possibility, that we may yet obtain mercy?

If our sins are no less numerous, no less of a scarlet dye, than those of other nations, and exceedingly aggravated beyond theirs, by being committed against clearer light, and the distinguished advantages we have long enjoyed: if we have not only transgressed the laws of God in common with others, but daringly trampled upon the gracious tenders of his forgiveness, which he has long continued to propose to us, with a frequency and energy almost peculiar to ourselves: if all the day long he has stretched out his hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people, (Rom. x. 21,) and, hitherto, almost in vain: if neither the tokens of his displeasure, nor the declarations of his love, have made a suitable impression upon our minds,—who can tell if he will yet be entreated? May we not fear, lest he should say, My Spirit shall strive with them no more: They are joined to their idols, let them alone: Hosea, iv. 17. When you spread forth your hands, I will hide my face from you; when you make many prayers, I will not hear! Isa. i. 15.

Where are now the mighty empires, which were once thought rooted and established as the everlasting mountains? They have disappeared like the mists upon the mountain-tops. Nothing of them remains but their names. They perished, and their memorials have almost perished with them, Ps. ix. 6. The patience of God bore with them for a time, and until the purposes for which he raised them up were answered; but when the measure of their iniquity was full, they passed away, and were dispersed, like foam upon the waters. What security have we from such a catastrophe? Or what could we answer, if God should put that question to us, "Shall not I visit for these things? Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" Jer. v. 9.

Where are now the churches which once flourished in Greece, and in the Lesser Asia? When the apostle Paul wrote to the former, and when our Lord indited his epistles to the latter, most of them were in a prosperous state. If there ever was a time when the commendations given to them were applicable to professors of the gospel in our land, I fear we can hardly claim them at present. Can it be justly said of us, that our faith and love are every where spoken of, and that we are examples to all that believe? That our works, and service, and faith, and patience, are known, and the last to be more than the first? Rom. i. 8; 1 Thess. i. 7; Rev. ii. 19. Or rather, may it not be said of too many, that while they profess to believe in God, in works they deny him? Titus i. 16.—That they are neither hot nor cold—That they have a name to live, and are dead—That they have at least forgotten their first love? Rev. iii. 1, 15; ii. 4. When these defects and declensions began to prevail in the first churches, the Lord admonished and warned them; but instead of watching and repenting, they gradually became more and more remiss. At length their glory departed, and their candlesticks were removed out of their places. Many regions which once rejoiced in the light of the gospel, have been long overspread with Mahomedan darkness; and the inhabitants are wretched, ignorant slaves.

Let us not trust in outward privileges, nor rest in a form of godliness destitute of the power. It will be in vain to say, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we, (Jer. vii. 4,) if the Lord of the temple should depart from us. When the Israelites were afraid of the Philistines, they carried the ark of the Lord with them to battle. But God disappointed their vain confidence. He delivered the ark of his glory into the hands of their enemies; (1 Sam. iv. 5, 11;) to teach them, and to teach us, that formal hypocritical worshippers have no good ground to hope for his protection.

Alas! then, who can tell?—Appearances are very dark at present. Besides what we may expect or fear from the rage and madness of our foreign enemies, we have much to apprehend at home. A spirit of discord has gone forth. Jeshurun has waxed fat, and kicked, Deut. xxxiii. 15. Many Britons seem weary of liberty, peace, and order. Our happy constitution, our mild government, our many privileges, admired by other nations, are despised and depreciated amongst ourselves: and that not only by the thoughtless and licentious, by those who, having little to lose, may promise themselves a possibility of gain, in a time of disturbance and confusion; but they are abetted and instigated by persons of sense, character, and even of religion. I should be quite at a loss to account for this, if I did not consider it as a token of the Lord's displeasure. When he withdraws his blessing, no union can long subsist.

"Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God, with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies, whom the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness and in the want of all things," Deut. xxviii. 47, 48. These words of Moses to rebellious Israel emphatically describe the former and the present state of many of the French nation, who have been despoiled, insulted, and glad if they could escape (great numbers could not so escape) with the loss of their all, and at the peril of their lives, to a more hospitable shore. May their sufferings remind us of our deserts! Who can tell if the Lord may yet be merciful unto us, and exempt us from similar calamities!

III. But though we have much cause to mourn for our sins, and humbly to deprecate deserved judgments, let us not despond. The Lord our God is a merciful God! Who can tell but he may repent, and turn from the fierceness of his anger, that we perish not? If the professed business of this day be not confined to a day, but if, by his blessing it may produce repentance not to be repented of, then I am warranted to tell you, from his word, that there is yet hope. You that tremble for the ark, for the cause of God, whose eyes affect your hearts, who grieve for sin, and for the miseries which sin has multiplied upon the earth, take courage. Let the hearts of the wicked shake, like the leaves of the trees when agitated by a storm; (Isa. vii. 2;) but be not you like them. The Lord God is your refuge and strength, your resting place, and your hiding place; under the shadow of his wings you shall be safe, Ps. xlvi. 1; xc. 1; cxix. 114.

1. He who loved you, and died for your sins, is the Lord of glory. All power in heaven and in earth is committed unto him, Matt. xxviii. 18. The Lord reigneth, let the earth be never so unquiet. Ps. xcix. 1. All creatures are instruments of his will. The wrath of man, so far as it is permitted to act, shall praise him, shall be made subservient to the accomplishment of his great designs; and the remainder of that wrath, all their projected violence, which does not coincide with his wise and comprehensive plan, he will restrain, Ps. lxxvi. 10. In vain they rage, and fret, and threaten. They act under a secret commission, and can do no more than he permits them. If they attempt it, he has a hook and a bridle in their mouths, 2 Kings xix. 28. When the enemies would come in like a flood, he can lift up a standard against them, Is. lix. 19. As he has set bounds and bars to the tempestuous sea, beyond which it cannot pass, saying, Hitherto shalt thou come and no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed; (Job xxxviii. 10, 11;) so, with equal ease, he can still the madness of the people, Ps. lxv. 7.

You do well to mourn for the sins and miseries of those who know him not. But if you make him your fear and your dread, he will be a sanctuary to you, and keep your hearts in peace, though the earth be removed, and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea, Is. viii. 13, 14. Ps. xlvi. 2.

2. Your part and mine, is to watch and pray.—Let us pray for ourselves, that we may be found waiting, with our loins girded up, and our lamps burning, (Mark xiii. 35; xiv. 38,) that we may be prepared to meet his will in every event. Let us pray for the peace of Jerusalem, for his church, which is dear to him, as the pupil of his eye, for the spread of his gospel, and the extension of his kingdom, till his great name be known and adored from the rising to the setting of the sun, and the whole earth shall be filled with his glory, Mal. i. 11. Many splendid prophecies are yet unfulfilled: and he is now bringing forward their accomplishment. Light would undoubtedly arise out of this darkness. Let us earnestly pray for a blessing from on high, upon our beloved King and his family, upon the counsels of government and parliament, and upon all subordinate authority in church and state—that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty, that religion and good order may be established, and iniquity be put to shame and silence. Thus we may hope to be secured, by the sure, though secret mark of divine protection, Ezek. ix. 4. The Lord will be our shield, though many should suffer or fall around us. The very hairs of our heads are numbered, Matt. x. 30. Or if, for the manifestation of our faith, and the power of his grace, he should permit us to share in common calamities, we may rely upon him to afford us strength according to our day, Deut. xxxiii. 25. He is always near to his people, a very present help in the time of trouble; and he can make the season of their greatest tribulations, the season of their sweetest consolations, 2 Cor. i. 5.

3. And let us pray in faith. Let us remember what great things the Lord has done in answer to prayer. When sin had given Sennacherib rapid success in his invasion of Judah, he did not know that he was no more than an axe or a saw in the hand of God, Isa. x. 15; xxxvii. 14—36. He ascribed his victories to his own prowess, and thought himself equally sure of Jerusalem. But Hezekiah defeated him upon his knees. He spread his blasphemous letter before the Lord in the temple, and prayed, and the Assyrian army melted away like snow. When Peter was shut up, and chained in prison, the chains fell from his hands, the locks and bolts gave way, and the iron gate opened, while the

church was united in earnest prayer for his deliverance, Acts xii. 5—13.

And as we have heard, so have we seen. God has signally answered the prayers of his people, in our own time. Much prayer, both public and private, was offered for our beloved King, during his late illness; and how wonderful, how sudden, how seasonable was his recovery! Surely this was the finger of God! When he thus removed our apprehensions, we were like them that dream, Psalm cxxvi. 1.

I believe prayer was no less efficacious, towards the end of the year 1792. I know many people treated the idea of danger at that time as chimerical, because the Lord was pleased to avert it. But I hope we have not quite forgotten the language we heard, and the persons we daily met with in the street, the many daring cabals which were held in this city, and the threatenings which were written in large characters upon the walls of our houses, at almost every corner. But the hearts of men were turned like the tide in the critical moment. Then I think the interposition of the Lord was evident! Then we had a repeated proof that he hears and answers prayer!

The present likewise is a very important crisis. All that is dear to us as men, as Britons, as Christians, is threatened. Our enemies are inveterate and enraged. Our sins testify against us. But if we humble ourselves before God, forsake our sins, and unite in supplications for mercy, who can tell but he may be entreated to give us that help which it would be in vain to expect from man? yea, we have encouragement to hope that he will be for us, (Rom. viii. 31,) and then none can prevail against us. But without his blessing our most powerful efforts, and best concerted undertakings cannot succeed.

You, who have access to the throne of grace, whose hearts are concerned for the glory of God, and who lament not only the temporal calamities attendant upon war, but the many thousands of souls who are yearly precipitated by it into an eternal, unchangeable state,—you, I trust, will show yourselves true friends to your country, by bearing your testimony, and exerting your influence against sin, the procuring cause of all our sorrows, and, by standing in the breach, and pleading with God for mercy, in behalf of yourselves, and of the nation. If ten persons, thus disposed, had been found even in Sodom, it would have escaped destruction, Gen. xviii. 32.

IV. There may be some persons in this assembly, who are little concerned for their own sins, and are of course incapable of taking a proper part in the service of the day. Yet I am glad that you are here; I pity you, I warn you. If you should live to see a time of public distress, what will you do? To whom will you look, or whither will you flee for help? All that is dear to you may be torn from you, or you from it.—Or, if it please God to prolong our tranquillity, you are liable to many heavy calamities in private life. And if you should be exempted from these, death is inevitable, and may be near. My heart wishes you the possession of those principles which would support you in all the changes of life, and make your dying pillow comfortable. Are you unwilling to be happy? or can you be happy too soon? Many persons are now looking upon you, who once were as you are now. And I doubt not, they are praying that you may be as they now are. Try to pray for yourself; our God is assuredly in the midst of us. His gracious ear is attentive to every supplicant. Seek him while he is to be found. Jesus died for sinners, and he has said, Him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out, John vi. 37. He is likewise the author of that faith, by which alone you can come rightly to him. If you ask it of him, he will give it you; if you seek it in the means of his appointment, you shall assuredly find, Matt. vii. 7. If you refuse this, there remaineth no other sacrifice for sin, Heb. x. 22, 27. If you are not saved by faith in his blood, you are lost for ever. O kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish from the way, if his wrath be kindled, yea but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him, Psalm ii. 12.

MOTIVES TO HUMILIATION AND PRAISE;

A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH,

ON TUESDAY, DECEMBER 19, 1797.

THE DAY OF GENERAL THANKSGIVING TO ALMIGHTY GOD FOR OUR LATE NAVAL VICTORIES.

How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God, and not man, the Holy One in the midst of thee.—Hosea xi. 8, 9.

The most High God, in the revelation of his will to men, adapts his language to the weakness of our conceptions. Heavenly truths are represented by images taken from earthly things, John iii. 12. The metaphors of eyes and hands are used in the scriptures to raise our thoughts to some due apprehension of his infinite knowledge, his omnipresence, and his almighty power, 1 Pet. iii. 12; Ps. lxxxix. 13. He is likewise spoken of, as deliberating, repenting, rejoicing, and grieving; yet we are sure that passions like those of which we are conscious in ourselves, cannot in strict propriety be ascribed to the holy and blessed God. No attentive and serious mind can be misled by this figurative analogy. We learn from the same scriptures of truth, that God is sovereign; that with him there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning, (James i. 17,) that his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure, (Is. xlvi. 10;) and that all his works are perfectly known to him, from the beginning of the world, Acts xv. 18. The more familiar modes of expression are designed to teach us, not what he is in himself, but how it becomes us sinful creatures to be affected towards him.

Thus, though the purpose of God concerning Israel was fixed and unalterable, yet, to impress us with a sense of his inflexible displeasure against sin, and at the same time to leave open the door of hope and encouragement for penitent sinners, we read of a debate, as it were, between his justice and his mercy. Justice demanded that Israel should be given up, delivered up to vengeance, to such a destruction as that by which God overthrew the cities in the plain of Jericho, Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim, Deut. xxix. 23. But Mercy interposed, pleaded for a respite, and prevailed. O Ephraim, O Israel, justice calls aloud for vengeance, but how shall I, how can I give thee up? No, I cannot, I will not, my heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled.

Two reasons are assigned, in his pathetic expostulation, why he would still exercise long-suffering towards those who so justly deserved to perish: 1. I am God, and not man. The patience of man, or of any mere creature, would have been overcome long ago by the perverseness of Israel; but he who made them, and he only, was able to bear with them still. 2. I am the Holy One in the midst of thee. In that dark and degenerate day, when the bulk of the nation was in a state of revolt and rebellion, there were a hidden remnant who feared and worshipped the Lord, and who mourned for the abominations which they could not prevent, Ezek. ix. 4, 6. Of these the Lord was mindful, and for the sake of these, deserved judgments were suspended from falling upon the rest.

The people of Israel were for a time in a state of hard bondage, and were severely oppressed in Egypt. The Lord brought them out from thence with a mighty hand, and a stretched-out arm. He afterwards drowned Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea; but he led Israel safely through the deep as upon dry land. In the barren wilderness he fed them with manna, and brought them water out of the rock. In the pathless wilderness

he guided them, by a cloud in the day, and by a fire in the night. He fought their battles, subdued their enemies, and put them in possession of the land he had promised to their forefathers. They were a people whom the Most High selected for himself, as his peculiar treasure, Ps. cxxxv. 4. He was their God and their King. They were the only people who were at that time favoured with the knowledge of the true God, and how to worship him acceptably. He gave them his laws and ordinances. He resided among them, and honoured them with a visible token of his presence in the tabernacle, and afterwards in the temple. They were likewise under an especial care of his providence. The fruitfulness of their land did not depend upon the climate, but the early and the latter rain returned regularly at the stated seasons, by his appointment; and when, in obedience to his commands, all their males from the most distant parts went up three times in a year to Jerusalem, and left their borders destitute of human defence, God so impressed the surrounding nations with awe, that, though hostile in their dispositions, they never availed themselves of that seemingly favourable opportunity for invading them, Exod. xxxiv. 24. Under the reign of Solomon, they enjoyed peace, plenty, prosperity, and wealth, in a degree till then unknown among the nations of the earth.

What returns did Israel make to the Lord for all these benefits? The history of their conduct is little more than the recital of a long series of ungrateful murmurings, disobedience, and rebellion. They resisted his will, broke his commandments, mingled with the heathen, and learned their ways. They repeatedly forsook the Lord God of their fathers, worshipped dumb idols, and practised all the abominations of the nations which the Lord had cast out before them. Their sins often brought calamities upon them. The Lord gave them up unto the hands of their enemies; they suffered by the sword, by pestilence and by famine. When he slew them, then they sought him; and when they sought him, he was entreated of them, Ps. lxxviii. 34. He delivered them out of their afflictions; but they soon forgot his goodness, and returned to their evil ways. He sent many of his servants in succession, to admonish and warn them; but they despised his words, they mocked his messengers, and misused his prophets, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16.

Can we wonder, if justice demanded the utter extirpation and ruin of a people so highly favoured, so well instructed, so often chastised and delivered, and yet so incorrigibly ungrateful, daring, and obstinate! Is it not rather wonderful to hear the Lord expressing a reluctance to execute the sentence so justly deserved, and saying of such a people, How shall I give thee up?

But can we read the history of Israel without remarking how strongly it resembles our own? Have we not been equally distinguished from the nations around us, by spiritual and temporal blessings, and by our gross misimprovement of them? We are assembled this day to join in public thanksgivings for public mercies, but we have great cause for public humiliation likewise. We have much reason to rejoice in the goodness of the Lord; but we have reason to temper our joy with trembling (Ps. ii. 11,) when we compare the state of things around us, with that of Ephraim and Judah in the days of the prophet Hosea.

While too many persons lose their time and temper in political and party disputes, and refer all the calamities we either feel or fear to instruments and second causes, let us acknowledge that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth! Rev. xix. 6. Let us consider sin as the procuring cause of all our troubles. Let us recognize his hand in them, and confess that, in all the distress he has brought upon us, he has not dealt with us as our iniquities deserve. May our hearts be suitably affected, while I attempt a brief sketch of the abounding evils and abominations prevalent amongst us, which might justly provoke the Lord to sweep this land, so long the land of peace and liberty, with the besom of destruction! and then we shall be prepared to praise him for those merciful and signal interpositions of his providence, which afford us some ground to hope, that, notwithstanding all our provocations, he will not yet give us up.

I. Offences of the same kind may be heightened and aggravated by circumstances. Thus an insult offered to a benefactor, a parent, or a king, is deemed more grievous than if the person offended was in all respects an equal. In this sense, I fear the sins of Great Britain are of a deeper dye than those of any nation in Europe; because they are committed against greater advantages and privileges than any other people have enjoyed. May not the Lord appeal to ourselves, as to Israel of old, What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done? Is. v. 4. After the black night of Popish darkness, in which Christendom had been for ages involved, Wickliff, the morning-star and harbinger of the Reformation, arose in our borders. From his time, we have been favoured with a succession of preachers of the gospel, and of witnesses to its truth and power. Not a few of these sealed their profession with their blood; and a much greater number suffered in the same cause, by fines, stripes, banishment, and imprisonment. But since the Revolution, and especially since the accession of King George I. to the throne, the spirit of persecution has been greatly repressed and chained up. We are not now called to resist unto blood. Nor is there any

Protestant country where religious liberty is so universally enjoyed, and with so little restraint, as in the dominions of Great Britain.

O fortunati nimium, sua si bona norint!

Our constitution, the basis and bulwark of our civil liberty, is the admiration or envy of our surrounding neighbours. It cost our forefathers many struggles to bring forward and establish this national blessing; but we have enjoyed it so long, and so quietly, that we seem almost to forget its value, how it was obtained, or how only it can be preserved? Wo be to us, if God should succeed the desires and endeavours of those who are disposed to exchange it for licentiousness! Add to this our public prosperity.—While we have been principals in many wars, which have spread devastation and misery far and wide abroad, we have had uninterrupted peace at home; and know so little of the calamities of war, that were it not for the increase of taxes, it is probable we should not be soon weary of hearing of battles, and the slaughter of thousands, provided victory declared on our side. Our arms and our commerce have, almost like the ocean, encompassed the habitable globe, and we are become the grand mart and emporium of the earth.

But what have been our returns to the Lord for all his goodness! May he not say of us, as of Israel, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me! Isa. i. 2. I attempt not to explain the unfulfilled prophecies in the Apocalypse, but the first, second, and third chapters of the prophecy of Isaiah are so obviously applicable to the present state of these kingdoms, that we need look no further to perceive both our sin and our danger. May the Lord soften our hearts for our own sins, the sins of professors of the gospel, and those national sins which strongly mark our character as a people!

1. The true Christian sees much cause of humiliation in himself. Though he cannot but take sorrowful notice of what passes around him, he is more ready to scrutinize and blame his own misconduct, than that of other men. He confesses that his best is defective and defiled. Though he exercises himself to maintain a conscience void of offence, and dares appeal to the Lord for the sincerity of his aims, he owns that in every thing he comes short. His obligations to the Redeemer are immense, and his sensations of gratitude, and exertions in his service, are vastly disproportionate to them: yet having accepted the atonement, and resting his hope of salvation upon Jesus, though his imperfections humble him, they do not discourage him. But he acknowledges, that if justice were strict to mark what is amiss, his own sins are so many and so great, that he could have no right to complain, though he had a large share of the heaviest calamities incident to this mortal life. They who are thus minded are the chariots and horsemen of the land in which they live. They sigh and mourn for their own sins, and the evils which they cannot prevent. They have little thanks from the blind, careless, ungodly many around them. They are rather scorned and despised for their singularity, and unfashionable preciseness; but if this nation be spared from destruction, it will be for their sakes, and for the attention with which God regards their prayers. If we had no such persons amongst us, our fleets and armies would prove but a poor and precarious defence. But I trust their number is not small. They are dispersed up and down throughout the kingdom, and are the salt of the earth, which preserves us from total putrefaction.

2. By professors, we mean, those who assent to the leading doctrines of the gospel, and usually attend where it is preached. I know this distinction is deemed invidious. We are sometimes asked—Why do you appropriate the term gospel to yourselves? Do not all ministers preach the gospel? Most certainly not. The doctrines from many pulpits are contrary, yea, contradictory. They cannot be all right. Yea, the doctrines from too many pulpits in our established church contradict the Articles and the Liturgy, which the preachers have solemnly subscribed. The Articles and Liturgy bear express testimony to the universal and total depravity of human nature, the Deity and atonement of the Saviour, the necessity of regeneration, a new birth, and a new life of sanctification, and of the abiding influences of the Holy Spirit of God, to awaken sinners, to produce faith, and to instruct, comfort, and establish those who believe. These points are essential to the scheme of the gospel, as it is set before us by the evangelists and apostles. They who espouse them are called professors—a title which includes all those whom I have already mentioned, but is extended to many more, or at least is assumed by them. Happy indeed would it be, if all who seem to agree in principles, were united in love among themselves, and exhibited in the sight of men, in their tempers, practice, and pursuits, a conversation becoming the gospel they profess. But in the days of the apostles there were those who, while they professed to believe in God, denied him by their works, who were enemies to the cross of Christ, and caused the good way to be evil spoken of, Phil. iii. 18; Titus i. 16. We lament, more than wonder, that it should be so now: for human nature is the same in all ages; and even among those of whom we hope better—contentions, divisions, the heat of party-zeal, the coldness of brotherly love, and a blameable conformity to the spirit and

customs of the world, are but too visible. The sins of professors alone, if duly considered, might make us apprehensive that judgment is even at the doors.

3. There are likewise sins so generally prevalent, so familiar and habitual in every rank of life, that they may properly be called national; because, either by their nature or their frequency, they mark and distinguish our public morals. To enumerate these, would be a painful and arduous task: but my subject requires me to notice some of the most prominent and notorious.

(1.) Infidelity.—Though the sophistry and machinations of the philosophers in France, and of those who style themselves the Illuminati in Germany, have more or less infected the whole of Christendom with their sceptical and dangerous sentiments, so that we hold them in common with many other nations, and though we have not like the unhappy French, openly and avowedly renounced the government of God; yet I fear that the worst kind of infidelity (which is still rapidly spreading through the land) is already become one of our national sins. Formerly, most of our freethinkers assumed the more modest name of deists; and though they rejected the scriptures, they professed a regard to what they called natural religion; they wrote likewise chiefly for men like themselves, of a speculative and inquisitive turn, and did not appear much concerned to proselyte the common people: they seemed to allow that the principles of Christianity, though not necessary to persons of their sagacity, might be useful to preserve the peace and order of society, and to keep the vulgar within some bounds of good government and subordination. I have myself known those who, upon this ground, regularly, or at least frequently, attended public worship; not that they desired or expected any benefit from it, but to set a good example to their wives, children, and servants, whom they thought either not competent to understand their more sublime discoveries, or not fit to be entrusted with them. These champions likewise went forth singly to the combat; but now there is a strong compacted confederacy against all religion, both name and thing. Neither the mortal nor the immortal deists are much thought of at present. Philosophers have pushed their inquiries far beyond the narrow views of the deists, and proclaim themselves to be atheists. They tell us, that either there is no God, or that he does not take cognizance of human affairs. To relieve the consciences of men from those foreboding fears of a future judgment which are not easily separable from guilt, they boldly affirm death to be an eternal sleep. Though these and similar dreadful tenets, have not obtained the publicity and authority with us which they have in France they have spread like a contagion through the kingdom. Multitudes in every degree of life, from the noble to the peasant, have adopted them.

Not that I ascribe the progress of infidelity chiefly to Thomas Paine, or to writers of a superior class in the same line; but they have brought it more into view. Long before the modern philosophers were born, the fool had said in his heart, there is no God, Ps. xiv. 1. Infidelity is congenial to human nature. Infidel writings, like the touch of Ithuriel's spear, have disclosed what for a time, was hidden or disguised. The spirits of many were prepared. They were infidels before, though for want of attention they scarcely knew it, or for want of boldness were afraid to own it. The effects are evident. With many people of fashion, infidelity is fashionable. Their dependents and servants imbibe their sentiments, and, so far as their ability reaches, imitate their practice. Every class of society downwards, tradesmen, porters, labourers, and hostlers, are no less pleased with thinking and acting without control, than their superiors. Thus the bonds of society are weakened; vice, idleness, impatience, murmuring, and insubordination are seen, wherever we turn our eyes. When will these things end? When men agree to cast off the fear of God, they will seldom long accord in any thing else. Man, in his natural state, is a wild creature; but while his conscience is not quite hardened, while he acknowledges a God, and expects a future state and a day of judgment, though he commits many evils, he is restrained from committing many more, and greater, to which his corrupt propensities would otherwise incline him, and from which he would not be deterred by mere human laws and penalties. Such a sinner may be compared to a lion in the Tower: but an infidel is a lion in the street.

(2.) The great neglect of the obligations of religion, amongst those who have not explicitly cast off all regard to it, is a national sin. If a stranger from some remote part of the world, who understood our language, was to see and hear all that passes at a contested election, at our cockpits, gaming-houses, race-grounds, boxing-matches, and many other promiscuous assemblies, what judgment could he form of our religion? Or could he readily believe that we had any? And yet we could not tell him that they were all infidels. Many who live in the habitual neglect or breach of the precepts of scripture, would still be thought Christians, though they have little, but the avowal of the name, to distinguish them from the most determined infidels. And it is to be feared, that such Christians constitute a very great majority of the people of England.

(3.) The contempt of the gospel of Christ, will, I fear, be found a national sin, with the

exception of the comparatively few who cordially embrace it. I have already explained in what sense I understand the word *Gospel*. When the doctrines of our established church, which in the main are conformable to the confessions and standards of all the protestant churches in Europe, are faithfully preached, and especially when first introduced into a parish, they usually cause a general alarm, they excite a general opposition. The gospel is shunned and dreaded like a pestilence, and the strongest exertions are made to prevent its entrance, or to expel it, if possible. The ministers who preach it faithfully are stigmatized and misrepresented. We learn from Suetonius, Tacitus, and Pliny, that the name Christian was once so extremely odious, that whoever dared to own it was suspected as capable or guilty of the worst crimes, though no proof could be brought of his having committed any. The word Methodist has a degree of the like effect in our day. It is not now, as when first imposed, the name of a particular sect or body of people, but is applied to all who preach and approve the doctrines of the gospel, if they are not Dissenters. And it operates with a kind of magical force; the very sound of the word is sufficient to fill the minds of many people with prejudices against the truth. Neither learning, piety, an exemplary conduct, nor a regular compliance with the rules of the rubric, can always, or often, secure a minister from contempt, if the giddy world think proper to call him a Methodist. The people prefer those who will prophesy smooth things, (Is. xxx. 10;) and in most places they have their wish. Candour itself cannot deny, that there are in many parishes of this kingdom official shepherds, who have neither will nor skill to teach or watch over their flocks; and multitudes of people who, for want of proper instruction, have little more knowledge of Christianity than the Indians in America. Some of us have reason to be thankful to God and to our superiors in church and state, that we are not discountenanced or molested in the exercise of our ministry. But our path is not the ordinary road to approbation or preferment. There are not many evangelical clergymen who have benefices, and these have been chiefly bestowed by private patronage.*

(4.) Because of swearing, the land mourneth, Jer. xxiii. 10. This generally prevailing enormity has two branches—First, Customary profane swearing, blasphemy, and execration, in common discourse. We can seldom walk the length of a street, without having our ears pained, and our hearts wounded, by the bitter imprecations which thoughtless creatures utter against themselves, or each other. It might be expected that this horrid wickedness would be confined to the lowest and most abandoned of the common people. But it is far otherwise. Gentlemen and noblemen make a point of distinguishing themselves from the vulgar by their houses, their dress, their tables, and their equipage; but many of them in their language take a strange pleasure in degrading themselves to a level with the vilest of the species; so that, were it not for their exterior, we might be led to think that they had spent their whole lives among stable-grooms and postilions; and thus by their own proficiency and example they harden and confirm in their wickedness those whom they imitate.

The insult offered to the majesty and holiness of God by common swearing, contributes greatly to take off a sense of the heinous sin of perjury, or false swearing; an appeal to the God of truth in confirmation of a lie. This is the other branch of that swearing for which the land ought to mourn, and, sooner or later, must mourn. Perjury is emphatically one of our national sins. "The multiplicity of oaths, which are interwoven into almost every branch of public business, involves thousands in the habitual guilt of perjury. Many of them, it is true, do not necessarily lead to sin, because honest and conscientious men may and do strictly observe them; but it is to be feared, a greater number deliberately and customarily violate these solemn obligations, and take them as often as imposed, without hesitation, and without any desire of complying with them. Not a few of these oaths are either so worded or so circumstanced, that it is morally impossible to fulfil them; and if a person was even to attempt it, he would be thought a busy-body or a fool; yet they must be tendered, and must be taken as a matter of form, when nothing more is expected or purposed on either side. The number of churchwardens and constables who are annually sworn is very great; and as these offices are chiefly held by rotation, in the course of a few years they take in a considerable part of the middling people in the kingdom. How many or how few of them act up to the letter and the spirit of the oaths they have taken, will be known in the day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed. But it is now evident, that while many, like sheep, tread without thought in the path of custom, content to forswear themselves because others have done so before them; and some are hardy enough to trifle with God and man for profit: the laws which enjoin and multiply oaths, do thereby furnish and multiply temptations to the sin of perjury. The frequency of oaths,

* Upon the death of the late Mr. Romaine, Rector of St. Andrew, Wardrobe, and St. Ann's, Blackfriars, the inhabitants united in a petition to the Lord Chancellor, in favour of his Curate, whom they wished to succeed him in the living: and the Lord Chancellor was pleased to grant their request. I mention this exception with pleasure; because I think it is much to the honour both of his Lordship, and of the parishioners.

the irreverent manner in which they are often administered, and the impunity with which they are broken, have greatly contributed to weaken the sense of every moral obligation, and to spread a dissolute and daring spirit throughout the land."*

(5.) Oppression is a national sin, if the grievance be publicly known, and no constitutional measures adopted for prevention or relief. Charges of this nature have been brought against the exercise of our power, both in the east and in the west. I pretend not to say how far they are founded in truth, or exaggerated. I confine myself to a single instance, of which my own experience warrants me to speak. I have more than once confessed with shame in this pulpit, the concern I had too long in the African slave-trade. This trade, marked as it is with the epithet INFAMOUS by a vote of the House of Commons, is still carried on, and under the sanction of the legislature. Though the repeated attempts to procure the abolition of this trade have not succeeded, they have doubtless contributed to meliorate the condition of the blacks who are in a state of slavery in our West-India islands. The mode of their transportation thither from the African coast seems to be less tormenting and fatal than formerly. How far this trade may have been affected by the present war I know not. When I was engaged in it, we generally supposed, for an accurate calculation was not practicable, that there were not less than a hundred thousand persons, men, women, and children, brought off the coast, by the European vessels of all nations, and that an equal number lost their lives annually, by the wars and other calamities occasioned by the traffic, either on shore, without reaching the ship, or on shipboard before they reached the places of sale. It was also supposed that more than one half, perhaps three fifths of the trade was in the hands of the English. If the trade is at present carried on to the same extent, and nearly in the same manner, while we are delaying from year to year to put a stop to our part of it, the blood of many thousands of our helpless, much-injured fellow-creatures, is crying against us. The pitiable state of the survivors who are torn from their nearest relatives, connections, and their native land, must be taken into the account.—Enough of this horrid scene. I fear the African trade is a national sin, for the enormities which accompany it are now generally known; and though perhaps the greater part of the nation would be pleased if it were suppressed, yet as it does not immediately affect their own interest, they are passive. The shop-tax, a few years since, touched them in a more sensible and tender part, and therefore petitions and remonstrances were presented and repeated, till the tax was repealed. Can we wonder that the calamities of the present war begin to be felt at home, when we ourselves wilfully and deliberately inflict much greater calamities upon the native Africans, who never offended us? That is an awful word, "Woe unto thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled," Isa. xxxiii. 1.

(6.) A proud boasting spirit, and a vain confidence in our strength and resources, is a prominent part of our national character. Though infidelity, irreligion, contempt both of the law and gospel of God, profaneness, perjury, and oppression, expose us to his vengeance,—though the judgments of God are abroad in the earth, and have fallen heavily on a great part of Europe,—and though his hand is evidently lifted up against us, yet few will see and acknowledge it, Isa. xxvi. 11. Instead of such a general spirit of humiliation as was awakened in Nineveh by the preaching of Jonah, so well becoming our sins and our situation, we still boast in our fleets and armies. Especially the Wooden Walls of Old England are spoken of as impregnable, and we still suppose ourselves to be sovereign lords of the sea. Some late providential dispensations were well suited to show us, not only the sin but the folly of this spirit: but the impression, if any, was transient; it soon wore off. The praise justly due to our admirals, officers, and seamen was readily offered; but unless the King had called us, as on this day, to unite with him in ascribing our success to the Lord of Hosts, who alone giveth the victory, even the verbal offering of praise to God would have been confined to a few. And still we boast. This arrogant spirit, and especially at such a time as this, is no small aggravation of all our other sins.

I could proceed to further particulars, but my spirits are depressed, and I hope the hearts of my hearers are duly affected by what I have already said. Is there any relief? Have we any ground to hope that the Lord will yet say of such a nation as this, "How shall I give thee up?" I turn with pleasure to this more comfortable branch of my subject.

II. Yes, though we have many causes for trembling, we are not without causes for a humble joy, and thankfulness.

1. I hope the occasion of our present assembling is a token for good. We are met in consequence of a royal proclamation, to join in spirit with our King, who, perhaps while I am speaking, may be entering St. Paul's Cathedral, attended by the royal family, both houses of parliament, and many of the nobility and principal persons of the court. He goes to make the most public and

* See Sermon on the guilt and danger of such a nation as this, p. 393.

solemn acknowledgment of his dependence on the providence and power of Almighty God, and to ascribe to him to whom it most justly belongs, praise and thanksgiving for the many interpositions he has favoured us with as a people, in this season of danger and distress; particularly, for the three signal, critical, and decisive victories which he gave us in succession, over the French, Spanish, and Dutch fleets. We remember with what universal joy the King's former appearance at St. Paul's, after his recovery from his illness, was entertained by his loyal subjects; and though the introduction of French principles and French politics, since that period, has not been without mischievous effects, we trust that the joy upon this occasion will at least be general.*

Though I cannot suppose that every person in the procession, or among the many thousands spectators, felt the same sentiments of gratitude to God, which induced the King to appoint a day of thanksgiving—yet I consider it as a public and national act; and in this view, contrasted with the atheistical rage and blasphemies of the French Directory and councils, who insult and defy, not these kingdoms only, but the God whom we worship, I indulge a hope, that, unworthy as we are of his mercy, the Lord will put a hook and a bridle in the mouths of these modern Rabshakehs, and will not give us up as a prey to their merciless rapacity and revenge.

2. When the French formed the design of invading Ireland, they thought themselves sure of success. They probably would have found encouragement in one part of that kingdom, if they could have reached it; and therefore they spoke like Pharaoh, who said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil,—and they were disconcerted almost in the same manner. The Lord blew with his wind, and scattered them. Some of their stoutest ships, and many of their men, sunk as lead in the mighty waters, Exod. xv. 9, 10. And the Lord God did it himself. We had a strong fleet to watch and oppose them. But they were not permitted to come near, or even to see one of their ships. Nor had our boasted naval force the opportunity of firing a single gun in our defence.

3. The suppression of the mutiny, which like an infectious disorder pervaded all our fleets, was so sudden, so unexpected, and at the time when it was risen to such an alarming height that all resistance seemed vain, that it can only be ascribed to the mercy and power of God. Then, if ever, was the time, when the proud and the boasters trembled.—And while we were thus exposed and defenceless in every quarter, the providence of God laid an embargo upon the fleets of our enemies, so that they could not attempt any thing against us. It is further to be observed, that the mutiny at the Nore, which was the most formidable, as the ships had the full command of the river, so that nothing could pass or repass to or from London; this threatening disaster, which painted terror and dismay in the countenance of almost every person we met in the streets, in the event led to that re-establishment of our marine discipline, without which the strength of our invincible navy would have been but like a rope of sand. Well may we say, What has God wrought!

4. In the close of the year 1795, we felt a scarcity, and feared a famine. Opportunity was presented and greedily seized by monopolizers to raise the corn to such an enormous price, that had it not been for great and liberal exertions, the poor in many places, perhaps in every place, must have been absolutely destitute of bread. What must the consequences have been if God had visited us with a scanty or a wet harvest the following year? For our resource from foreign supplies was cut off in many parts, and rendered very precarious in the rest by the war. But he is a hearer of prayer. In 1796, the earth brought forth by handfuls, Gen. xli. 47. Such an abundant harvest, and such a remarkable fine season for gathering in the precious fruits of the earth, have been seldom known.

5. Our sins have involved us in a calamitous war; and though our sufferings are not to be compared with those of the countries on the continent where the war has raged, it has brought upon us much real distress. Many widows and orphans are bemoaning the effects. The decline of some manufactures, the increased taxes, the advanced price of most of the necessaries of life, are severely felt by the industrious poor, and by many families in the middling and lower classes of society. It is well known that there is a number of persons who unhappily employ their abilities and influence, to aggravate the sense of these difficulties, to inflame the minds of the sufferers, to work upon their passions, to alienate them from the government, and to make them long, if possible, for such liberty and equality as has already reduced France to the most pitiable state of anarchy and misery. That such attempts have not succeeded, that we are still preserved, not only from foreign invasion but from internal commotions, I ascribe to the power of the great God over the hearts of

* I was not mistaken in my expectation. The order and regularity with which the procession was conducted, the peaceful behaviour of the immense multitude of spectators, the serenity and mildness of the weather, so unusual with us in the depth of winter, the almost total exemption from what are commonly called accidents, and the quietness with which the evening closed, I consider collectively, as warranting a hope that the Lord was pleased to smile upon the day, and upon the design.

the children of men; and I consider it as a farther ground of hope that he will not give us up.

III. Why would he not give up degenerate Israel, when strict justice demanded their destruction? Two reasons are assigned in my text for his forbearance, which are well suited to encourage the prayers and hopes of those amongst ourselves who love and fear him.

1. I am God, and not man.—If we had offended men, or angels, as we have offended our Creator and Redeemer, and they had permission and power to punish us, our case would be utterly desperate. Only he who made us, is able to bear with us. All the attributes (as we speak) of the infinite God, must of course be equally infinite. As is his majesty, so is his mercy, Ecclesiasticus ii. 18. What is the puny power of man, compared with that almighty power which formed and upholds the immense universe? The disproportion is greater than that between a single drop of water and the boundless ocean. Thus his thoughts are higher than ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth. Who can set bounds to the exercise of patience? When sentence was denounced against Nineveh, they humbled themselves before him, and he suspended the execution. There is at least a peradventure in our favour, "Who can tell if God will turn away from his fierce anger that we perish not?" He has said, "At what time I shall speak concerning a nation, or a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, or to destroy; if that nation turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them," Jer. xviii. 7, 8. We do not suppose that all the inhabitants of Nineveh were savingly converted; but they humbled themselves with one consent, they cried for mercy, and they were spared. We do not expect a national conversion, and I fear we have little prospect of a national humiliation. But,

2. I am the Holy One in the midst of thee, —Next to the consideration of his infinite mercy, this is our strongest ground for consolation. The Holy One is still in the midst of us? Degenerate and wicked as we are, God has a people, a remnant amongst us. I have spoken of these already. Their number is small if compared with the bulk of the nation; but if they could be collected together, they would form a considerable body (I trust it is an increasing body,) who, though distinguished by different names, and dispersed far and wide into different parts of the land, are united, by a faith of divine operation, to one head, and in one common interest and design.—They belong to that kingdom which is not of this world, and which (unlike all other kingdoms) cannot be shaken. But their principles lead them to seek the welfare of the communities in which they live. These are, under God, *decus et tutamen*, the glory and the defence of Great Britain. They are lights shining in a dark place. They are believers, and their faith worketh by love. But as they follow the example of their Lord and Master, the world knows not them, because it knows not him. Here and there, individuals, by an unblameable consistent conduct, in a course of years, if they cannot change the hearts of gainsayers, are enabled to stop their mouths, and put their ignorance to silence by well-doing, 1 Pet. ii. 15. But many persons despise them in the gross, and affect to deem them (perhaps in defiance to the checks of their own consciences,) either hypocrites or visionaries, credulous fools, or designing knaves. But their record is on high. They have access to God, and communion with him, by the Son of his love. They have the spirit of prayer, and their prayers are heard. The ship in which Paul sailed to Italy, was preserved from sinking, though apparently in the utmost danger, because the apostle was on board her. Not only was this servant of God as safe in a storm at sea as if he had been on shore, but for his sake the Lord preserved the lives of all who were in the vessel. The state ship of this nation is now in jeopardy, she is brought into deep waters, tossed with tempests, and her rowers (Ezek. xxvii. 26,) are almost at their wits end; but there is a precious *depositum* on board. A people dear to the Lord are embarked in the same bottom with the rest, and we hope their prayers will prevail for the safety of the whole. The French, who know little of christianity but as they have seen it through the corrupt medium of popery, having triumphed over and melted down the golden and silver images of their tutelary saints, promise themselves an easy victory over us. They know not that the Holy One of Israel is in the midst of us, and that there are a people here who are under his special protection. They know not that like Sennacherib, their success is wholly owing to their being instruments of his will, like saws or hammers in the hand of the workman; and that when they have accomplished his purpose, he can and he will say to them, Hitherto thou shalt come, and no farther. They have succeeded beyond their own expectations, far and wide upon the continent: but all their attempts and designs against our favoured land have hitherto been rendered abortive. We hope they will prove so.

At all events, it shall be well with the righteous, Isa. iii. 12. Rejoice, believers, in the Lord. You may be assured upon the warrant of his faithful promise, either that he will preserve you from the evils which our sins give us such cause to apprehend; or if he should appoint you to share in a

common calamity, he will make your strength equal to your day, and will prepare your shoes of iron and brass, (Deut. xxxiii. 26,) when any part of the road, on which you travel through this wilderness towards your heavenly home, shall prove very difficult and rugged. Pray for grace to sit loose to the world, and you will have nothing to fear. The first christians rejoiced in the spoiling of their goods; and so shall you, if the Lord calls you to the trial. You have the same Saviour to support you; and you likewise have treasures, (Heb. x. 34,) far better and more enduring, out of the reach of violence. The Lord teaches us to consider even the loss of life as comparatively of small importance, when he says, Fear not them that can kill the body, but can do no more. They cannot do that without his permission. The very hairs of your head are numbered, Luke xii. 4; Matt. x. 39. And most of those who have suffered death for him who died upon the cross for them, have thought the honour of dying in his cause more to be valued than a thousand lives.

My feelings are painful for you who live without God in the world. I do not wonder if your hearts tremble like the leaves of a tree when agitated by a mighty wind, Is. vii. 2. You know not what may come upon you, but you forebode the worst: and should it prove so, you have no resource, no hiding place, no Almighty Friend to whom you may with confidence apply for help in time of trouble. Death, at least, is inevitable; and will you dare to die (yet die you must) if your hearts be unhumbled, and your sins unpardoned? We preach to you a gracious, powerful Saviour, who invites you to seek him, and has said, "Him that cometh to me, I will in nowise cast out." Seek him then to-day—whilst it is called to-day. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. To-morrow is not your own.

But let believers rejoice and be glad. The Lord reigns—your Lord reigns, Ps. xcvii. 1. He who loved you, and gave himself for you, possesses and exercises all power in heaven and earth, Matt. xxviii. 18. Though clouds and darkness are about his throne, and his paths are untraceable by us, we are sure that he is carrying on his great designs, for the glory of his great name, and for the extension and establishment of his church in a way worthy of himself—worthy of infinite wisdom and goodness. Make his name your strong tower (Prov. xviii. 10,) of refuge. Hold out faith and patience. Yet a little while, and we hope to meet, "where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest," Job iii. 17. And to hear those welcome words, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," Matt. xxv. 34.

TRACTS.

APOLOGIA;

OR,

FOUR LETTERS TO A MINISTER OF AN INDEPENDENT CHURCH,

BY A MINISTER OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

———Quid me alta silentia cogis
Rumpere?——— VIRG.

Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. For in Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love. ROM. xiv. 19. GAL. v. 6.

LETTER I.

MY DEAR FRIEND AND BROTHER,—You have more than once gently called upon me for the reasons which induced me to exercise my ministry as a Clergyman of the Church of England, rather than among the Dissenters, where my first religious connections were formed, and with many of whom I still maintain a cordial friendship. Hitherto I have usually waved the subject, and contented myself with assuring you in general terms, that as the preference I gave to the establishment was the result of serious, and, I trust, impartial inquiry; so I had never seen reason to repent of it, no not for a minute, since the day of my ordination. I now purpose to give you a more particular answer. And as you are not the only person who has expressed a friendly surprise at my choice, I shall communicate my reasons from the press, that all my friends who have been at a loss to account for my conduct, may have such satisfaction as it is in my power to give them. I shall, however, keep you particularly in my eye while I write, that a just sense of the candour and affection with which you have always treated me, may regulate my pen, and preserve me (if possible) from that harsh and angry spirit, into which writers upon controversial points are too often betrayed.

I confess, that as in this business my conscience is clear in the sight of him to whom alone I am properly accountable; I could wish still to continue silent, and submit to be a little misunderstood by some persons whose good opinion I prize, rather than trouble the public with what more immediately relates to myself. But something upon this subject seems expedient in the present day; not so much by way of apology for one or a few individuals, as with a view of obviating prejudices, and preventing, or at least abating, the unhappy effects of a party-spirit.

There was a time when the Non-conformists groaned under the iron rod of oppression, and were exposed to fines, penalties, and imprisonment, as well as to cruel mockings, and the lawless rage of a rabble, for worshipping God according to the light of their consciences. Yet I apprehend their non-conformity was rather the occasional and ostensible, than the real cause of the hard treatment they met with. The greater part of the Non-conformist ministers of that day were the light and glory of the land.—They were men full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, penetrated with a deep sense of the Redeemer's glory and love, and of the worth of souls. Their ministrations were accompanied with unction and power, and they were instrumental in turning many sinners from the evil of their ways. It is no wonder that the world hated such men; that snares were spread for their feet, their liberty abridged, and that many said, Away with them, they are not worthy to live! It is probable that if these servants of the Most High could have enjoyed that freedom for their persons and assemblies, which, in answer to their

prayers, is now possessed by those who bear the same name, they would have been well satisfied that the Established Church should have remained in peaceful possession of its own order and ritual. And several among them, not the lowest in repute for wisdom and piety, continued long to worship occasionally in the Parish Churches, after they had been ejected from them as preachers. But things were studiously carried against them with a high hand. The exaction of re-ordination, and the little time allowed for subscribing the book of Common Prayer, which many of the ministers had not been able to procure when the law called for their assent to it, were two circumstances which greatly contributed to swell the Bartholomew-list. It was well known to some of the leaders in that unhappy business, that there were among the Non-conformists wise and moderate men, who were not disposed to quit their parochial cures, unless they were constrained by the harshest and most violent measures; such therefore were the measures they adopted.

It is our mercy to live in more quiet times. We are on all sides freed from restraints in religious concerns; and every person is at liberty to profess, preach, worship, or print as he thinks proper. But it is still to be lamented that they who are united upon the same foundations, and agree in the same important leading principles, should lay so much stress upon their circumstantial differences in sentiment, as to prevent the exercise of mutual love and forbearance, and that, instead of labouring in concert within their respective departments to promote the common cause, they should be at leisure to vex and worry each other with needless disputation and uncharitable censure. I hope, amongst us, the High-Church principles which formerly produced unjustifiable and oppressive effects, are now generally exploded. But may we not lay a claim in our turn, to that moderation, candour, and tenderness, from our dissenting brethren, which we cheerfully exercise towards them? But as we (I think) are no longer the aggressors, so they seem no longer content to stand upon the defensive. We wish to join them with heart and hand in supporting and spreading the great truths of the gospel; and such as you, my friend, approve our aims, and rejoice with us, if God is pleased to give us success. But there are those among you, whose persons and general conduct we respect, from whom we do not find equal returns of good-will, because we cannot join with them in the support of a palladium which bears the name of the *Dissenting Interest*. I know not whether this phrase was in use a hundred years ago; but were I to meet with it as referring to that period, I should understand by it little more or less than the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom. At present, when I consider the various names, views, and sentiments, which obtain among those who form this aggregate, styled the Dissenting Interest, I am at a loss what sense to put upon the term. May I not say without offence, that it is, at least, a very heterogeneous body? May I not hope, without presumption, that though you and I are not agreed on the subject of Church Government, yet I am related to you by a much nearer and stronger tie than that which binds you to the Dissenting Interest? I confess that so far as it is the interest of those who depreciate the person and blood of the Saviour, and deny the agency and influence of the Holy Spirit, or the total depravity of fallen man, so far I cannot (in a religious view) be a friend to it. On the other hand, so far as it regards those who love, avow, and preach the doctrines, experience, and practice, which both you and I include in our idea of the Gospel, so far I can truly say, though not a Dissenter myself, the Dissenting Interest is dear to my heart, and has a share in my daily prayers. And in this I am persuaded I speak the sentiments of many both ministers and laymen in the Establishment. We are sorry, therefore (at least I am sorry,) though not angry, when books are written, or declarations* (perhaps in the most solemn occasions of worship) unseasonably made, which seem not so much designed to confirm Dissenters in their own principles, as to place those who cannot accede to them in an unfavourable light; the ministers especially, who, according to some representations, must be supposed to be almost destitute of common sense, or else of common honesty.

When I write a letter, especially to a friend, I think myself released from that attention to method which I might observe if I were composing a treatise. As my heart dictates, my pen moves. I therefore hope you will bear with me if I do not come directly to what I proposed; which was, to give you some account of the motives of my own conduct. It may not be improper to premise a few preliminary observations. I shall not weary you by attempting to justify every thing that obtains in our way, nor call your attention to all the minutiæ which might furnish subject for debate to those who know not how to employ their time better. It would be mere trifling to dispute for or against a surplice or a band, a gown or a cloak, or to inquire whether it be the size, or the shape, which renders some of these habiliments more or less suitable for a minister, than the others. But perhaps a few strictures upon establishments and liturgies may not be wholly unpertinent to my design.

That national religious establishments under the New Testament dispensation are

*Some of these letters were written in the year 1777.

neither of express divine appointment, nor formed in all points upon a scriptural plan, I readily admit. Whether upon this account they cannot be submitted to without violating the obedience we owe to the Lord Jesus as head and lawgiver of his church, I shall consider hereafter. At present permit me only to hope (for my own sake,) that such submission is not absolutely sinful; and in that view to offer a word in favour of their expedience. I plead not for this or that establishment, or the administration of one preferably to another; but chiefly for that circumstance which I suppose is common to them all: I mean, the parcelling out a country, the government of which is professedly Christian, and certain districts, analogous to what we call parishes, and fixing in each of those districts, a person with a ministerial character, who by his office is engaged to promote the good of souls within the limits of his own boundary. I think the number of parishes in England and Wales is computed to be not much fewer than ten thousand. The number of dissenting churches and congregations in England and Wales (if those whom I have consulted as the most competent judges are not mistaken,) will not be found greatly to exceed one thousand. In how many, or in how few of these the old Puritan Gospel (if I may so call it) is preached or prized, I deem you a better judge than myself. It is certain, that the number of Dissenting ministers who are very willing it should be publicly known that they differ widely from the sentiments of their forefathers, is not small. However, we will take them all into the estimate. Now, let us for a moment suppose the establishment with all its provisions removed and annihilated. In this case, some of the Dissenting ministers might indeed change their situations, and fix in places where they might hope for more extensive influence; but as none of them could be in two places at once, about nine-tenths of the kingdom would be deprived, at a stroke, of the very form of public religion, and reduced in a short time (for any relief the Dissenting interest could afford) to a state little better than heathenism. That there is any regard paid to the Lord's day through the greater part of the land, that the Holy Scriptures are publicly read to thousands who probably would otherwise know no more of the Bible than they do of the Koran, are good effects of the national establishment, which I think can hardly be denied, even by those who are most displeased with it. For this reason, if I could not conform to the establishment myself, I think I should speak respectfully of it, and bless God for it. Some established form of religious profession, with a full and free toleration for all who think they can serve God more acceptably upon a different plan, appears to me the most desirable and promising constitution, for preserving the rights of conscience, and for promoting the welfare of souls. I believe, therefore, that the church of England, as by law established (for it claims no higher title,) though it be not a perfect institution, and notwithstanding its real or supposed defects, and the faults of individuals within its community, has been upon the whole, and will be, a blessing to the nation; and that its preservation is an effect of the wise and gracious providence of the great Head of the Church universal.

From the expediency of parochial order, I would farther deduce the expediency of a rubric and liturgy. For I cannot conceive an established church, without including, in my idea, some determinate rule or line respecting doctrine and worship, by which it is discriminated from other churches which are not so established. As to our liturgy, I am far from thinking it incapable of amendment; though, when I consider the temper and spirit of the present times, I dare not wish that the improvement of it should be attempted, lest the intended remedy might prove worse than the disease. As I am not called to defend it, I shall only say, what I believe will be allowed by many candid persons on your side, that the general strain of it is scriptural, evangelical, and experimental. It recognizes with precision the one great object of worship, in his personal distinctions, and glorious attributes: the honours and offices of the Redeemer, the power and agency of the Holy Spirit, the evil of sin, the depravity of man, and all the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel. As to the composition, I question if any thing in the English language, (our version of the Bible excepted,) is worthy of being compared with it, for simplicity, perspicuity, energy, and comprehensive fulness of expression. But I suppose the objection does not lie so much against our liturgy in particular, as in general against the use of liturgies of any kind. And for aught I know, if the compilers of our liturgy could have expected, that all the parishes in the kingdom, and from age to age, would be supplied with ministers competently acquainted with the mysteries of the gospel, and possessed of the spirit of grace and supplication, they might have left them under less restraint in conducting public worship. I believe many of the Dissenters take it for granted, that a considerable part of our clergy are not only unable to pray in public to the edification of their hearers without a form, but are unfit for the ministerial office in every view. Should this be true, it is a truth which I hope would excite lamentation rather than ridicule or invective, in all who profess a regard to the glory of God, or love to the souls of men. But upon this supposition I should think an evangelical liturgy a great blessing; as it must secure the people, (that is the bulk

of the nation,) from being exposed to the same uncertainty and disappointment from the reading-desk, as they are liable to from the pulpit. For they who cannot, or do not preach the gospel, are not like to pray agreeably to the spirit of the gospel, if that part of the public service was likewise left to their own management. Or shall we say, it is an advantage to some dissenting congregations, that their ministers, not being confined to a form of sound words, there is little more of Christ or of grace to be found in their prayers than in their sermons? Is it not too hastily taken for granted by many, that God cannot be worshipped in spirit and in truth by those who use a form of prayer? or that he will not afford them who so approach him any testimony of his acceptance? If the words of a form suit and express the desires and feelings of my mind, the prayer is as much my own, as if I had conceived it upon the spot. On the other hand, if I have the greatest readiness and fluency in diversifying expressions, so that my prayer should always appear unstudied and new, yet if my spirit, or the spirits of those who join with me, be not engaged in it, though I may admire my own performance, and be applauded by others, it is no better than a mere lifeless form, in the sight of him who searcheth the heart. Not to say that many who profess to pray extempore, that is, without either a printed or a written form, go so much in a beaten path, that they who hear them, frequently can tell with tolerable certainty, how they will begin, when they are about the middle, and when they are drawing towards the close of their prayer.

It is said, that a prescribed form precludes the exercise of a gift in prayer, which is true; but then, as I hinted before, it in some good measure supplies the want of such a gift; and blessed be the Lord, there are many living witnesses who can declare to his praise, that a form does not restrain, much less preclude the exercise of grace. They know and are sure that their Lord and master owns and comforts them in what their brethren hastily condemn them for. It is well for us that he seeth not as man seeth, and is no more a respecter of parties than of persons.

It cannot be denied, that the Lord himself appointed forms of prayer and praise to be used in the Old Testament church. When the ark set forward, and when it rested, Moses addressed the Lord, not according to the varied emotions of his own spirit, but statedly in the same determinate expressions, Numb. x. 35, 36. So likewise in the solemn benediction which the high priest was to pronounce upon the people, Numb. vi. 23, 27. Again, at the presenting of the first fruits, though the heart of the offerer might be filled with gratitude, he was not to express it in his own way, but the Lord himself prescribed the form of his acknowledgment, confession, and prayer, Deut. xxvi. 12—15. But it may be said, these were enjoined under the Levitical institution, which is now abrogated, and that we live under a dispensation of greater light and liberty. I wish however, with all our light and liberty, we could more fully come up to the spirit of some of the devotional parts of the Old Testament, which were recorded for our instruction, and most certainly are not abrogated. The book of Psalms especially, contains a rich variety of patterns for prayer, if we may not call them forms, adapted to all the various exercises of the life of faith. And if, when I read or repeat such Psalms as the 63d, 84th, or 86th, I could feel, in the manner I wish, the force of every expression, I should think I prayed to good purpose, though I were not to intermingle a single word of my own. So likewise with respect to that summary which our Lord condescended to teach his disciples; though I believe it had a peculiar reference to the state in which they were before his passion, and while he was still with them; yet agreeable to the fulness of his wisdom, it is so comprehensive, that I apprehend every part of a believer's intercourse with God in prayer, may be reduced, without forcing, to one or the other of the heads of this prayer. And I should esteem it a golden hour indeed, one of the happiest seasons I ever enjoyed in prayer, if I could repeat it with a just impression of the meaning of every clause. But alas! such are the effects of our unhappy differences, or rather of a wrongness of spirit in maintaining them, and so prone are we to think we cannot be too unlike those whom we are not pleased with, that even the words which our Lord himself has taught us, are depreciated and disused by many, I fear, upon no better ground than because they are retained in the usage of the Church of England. Though, besides giving us a pattern to pray after that manner, he has at least permitted us to use it as a form, directing us, when we pray, to say, "Our Father, which art in heaven," &c. If scriptural warrant be required, I think we have one more clear and express for the use of this prayer, than can be found for some things upon which no small stress is laid by our Dissenting brethren.

Some persons might possibly allege, that if the use of scriptural forms of prayer were admitted, it would plead nothing in favour of such forms as are of human composition. But as I believe the more judicious part of the Dissenters would not make this distinction, a few words may suffice for an answer. Most of us, when we preach, profess to preach the word of God, and I think we are sufficiently authorised to use the expression, so far as our sermons are explanatory of scriptural truths, and agreeable to them. For though the system of truth contained in the

holy scriptures has a peculiar authority, as the fountain from whence we are to derive our public discourses, and the standard by which they are to be tried; yet truth, as to its nature, does not admit of degrees, but all propositions, if they be true, must be equally true, and every conclusion which is rightly inferred from scriptural premises, must be, in whatever words it is expressed, (if they are precise and clear,) as true as the premises from which it is drawn. If I give a just definition or explication of a doctrine of the Bible in my own words, the truth or importance of that doctrine is not affected or weakened by the vehicle in which I convey it; nor would a hearer have a right to withhold his attention or assent, from a pretence, that though the proposition itself was true, he was not concerned in it, because I had not expressed it in scriptural phrases. It is only upon this ground that the propriety and authority of preaching can be maintained; and the like reasoning may be applied to prayer. A prayer is scriptural, if conformable to the promises, patterns, and truths of scripture, though it should not contain one phrase taken *totidem verbis* from the Bible.

May I not here appeal to the practice of the Dissenters themselves? I suppose Dr. Watts' Hymns, and his imitation of David's Psalms, especially the latter, are used, by a large majority of Dissenting congregations, in their public worship. Many of these pieces are devotional, that is, they are in the strain of prayer, or praise. They are, therefore, forms of prayer or praise; and when the first line is given out, it is probable that several persons in the assembly know beforehand every word they are to sing. In some congregations the psalm or hymn is delivered line by line, and in most, the bulk of the people are provided with books. Now it appears to me, that when a worshipper who attends to what is going forward, and is not content with a mere lip-service, joins in singing verses, which express the desires and petitions of his heart to the Lord, he prays; and if he uses verses with which he was before acquainted, he prays by a form; he does the very thing for which we are condemned; unless it can be proved that the fault and evil which is essential to a form in prose, is entirely removed if the substance of the obnoxious form be expressed in metre or rhyme.

> Crito freely will rehearse
> Forms of prayer and praise in verse:
> Why should Crito then suppose
> Forms are sinful when in prose?
> Must my form be deemed a crime
> Merely for the want of rhyme?

I have heard of a minister who used to compose hymns in the pulpit. It was his custom to give out one line, and by the time the congregation had sung the first, he had a second ready for them, and so on, so long as he thought proper to sing. These were not forms, they were composed *pro re nata*. Before he had finished a second stanza, the former (as to the verse and cadence) was in a manner forgotten; and the same hymn was never heard twice. I know not what these unpremeditated pieces were in point of composition; but were I persuaded of the unlawfulness of forms of prayer, and, at the same time, approved of the practice of singing in public worship; I should extremely covet the talent of extempore hymn-making, as one of the most necessary gifts a minister could possess in order to maintain a consistency in his whole service.

I here close what I intended by way of introduction. In my subsequent letters, I purpose to acquaint you more directly with the reasons which determined my own choice, and which still satisfy me, that in receiving Episcopal ordination, and exercising my ministry in the established church, I have not acted wrong. At present, I shall relieve your attention, by subscribing myself

Your affectionate friend and brother.

LETTER II.

MY DEAR FRIEND AND BROTHER,—As such I address you; as such, notwithstanding our different views of church-government, you acknowledge me. You have confirmed your love to me by many repeated proofs; and it is the desire of my heart that nothing may take place on either side to weaken the exercise of that friendship, which having the faith and hope of the gospel for its basis, is calculated to subsist and flourish in a better world. With this thought upon my mind, it is impossible that I should write a single line with an intention of grieving or offending you; and I am persuaded, the same consideration on your part will dispose you to a candid perusal of what I offer. I had rather be silent than plead even for truth in an angry, contentious spirit. For every year of my life strengthens my conviction of the importance of that divine aphorism, "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

How far what I have suggested in favour of establishments and liturgies may appear conclusive to you, I know not. I depend much upon your candour; but I make allowances for the unavoidable influence of education, connection, and habit, both in you and in myself. We generally ascribe the dissent of those who differ from us, in part at least, to prejudices of this kind; but as it is very natural to think favourably of ourselves, we almost take it for granted that we have either escaped or outgrown every bias. Though some of the principles we maintain have been

instilled into us from our childhood, and we have been confirmed in what we say is right, by the instruction, advice, and example of friends, exactly as others have been confirmed in what we call wrong; yet that positiveness, which in them is the effect of ignorant prejudice, is in us a very different thing; a just attachment to truth, and the result of impartial examination and full conviction. For my own part, I dare not say that I am free from all bias and prepossession, but I desire and endeavour to guard against their influence.

But though I have ventured to defend the propriety of a national establishment, and upon that ground, the expediency of a liturgy, I need not tell you that I had no hand in forming either the one or the other. By the allotment of Divine Providence, I was born in a nation where these things had taken place long before I came into the world. Therefore, when the Lord gave me a desire to preach his gospel, and it became necessary to determine under what character I should exercise my ministry; the question before me was not, What form of church-government I might propose as the most scriptural, if all parties amongst us were willing to refer themselves to my decision? But my inquiry was rather directed to this point, What would be my path of duty, *rebus sic stantibus*, living, as I did, in the island of Great Britain, and in that part of it named England? At first, indeed, I saw but little room for deliberation. For, about six years after I was awakened to some concern for my soul, my situation in life had secluded me equally from every religious party. During this period, in which I walked alone, the Lord was pleased to show me the way to the throne of grace, and to lead me to study and prize his holy word. By his blessing, I made some advances in knowledge, though slowly, under such discouragements and disadvantages, as they, who from the beginning of their inquiries, are favoured with public ordinances, and the help of Christian conference, can have no proper conception of. At length I became acquainted with some of his people, and had frequent opportunities of hearing the gospel. My first connections of this sort were chiefly with Dissenters, and brought me, as it were, into a new world. For, till then, I had hardly an idea of the different names and modes by which professing Christians were distinguished and subdivided, nor of the animosity with which their various disputes were carried on. But as I received benefit and pleasure from my intercourse with my new friends, it is no wonder that while my heart was warm, and my experience and judgment unformed, I should enter with readiness into all their views. Thus, together with the real advantages I obtained among them, I imbibed at the same time a strong prejudice against the established church, and hastily concluded, that though I might occasionally communicate with it as a private person, it would be impossible to officiate in it as a minister without violating my conscience. Accordingly, my first overtures were to the Dissenters; and had not the Providence of God remarkably interposed to prevent it, I should probably have been a brother with you in every sense. But my designs were overruled. A variety of doors by which I sought entrance (for I did not give up upon the first disappointment) were successively shut against me. These repeated delays afforded me more time to think and judge for myself; and the more I considered the point, the more my scruples against conformity gave way. Reasons increased upon me, which not only satisfied me that I might conform without sin, but that the preference (as to my own concern) was plainly on that side. Accordingly, in the Lord's due time, after several years waiting to know his will, I sought and obtained Episcopal ordination. And I seriously assure you, that though I took this step with a firm persuasion that it was right, I did not at that time see so many reasons to justify my choice, nor perhaps any one reason in so strong a light, as I have since. Far from having regretted this interesting part of my conduct for a single hour, I have been more satisfied with it from year to year. You will please, therefore, to accept what I am about to offer, not merely as an account of the motives which influenced me twenty years ago, but rather as the considerations which at this minute call upon me to be heartily thankful to the Lord, for leading me by a way which I knew not, to labour in that part of his vineyard, which experience has proved to be most suitable for maintaining my personal peace and comfort, and (I verily believe likewise) for promoting my usefulness as a minister.

Some of our Dissenting brethren, who I hope are willing to think as well of the awakened clergy as they can, kindly allow us to be well-meaning people; they believe we desire to be useful, and think it not impossible but that in some instances we may be so: but they pity us either for not having more light or for not having courage to follow that light, which they suppose must force itself upon us, if we did not wilfully shut it out. From what they hear of us they are staggered. They are loth to deny that the Lord is with us at all: but then, if the Lord be with us indeed, why are we thus? It is almost unaccountable to them upon this supposition how we can remain where we are. They are expecting from day to day, that if we are enlightened, as we profess, and honest men, as they wish to find us, we shall surely come out from Babylon, renounce our slavery and will-worship, and openly attach ourselves to

the Dissenting Interest. Could we do this, and persuade our people to follow us, they would probably no longer doubt whether the Lord had wrought by our ministry, or not.

I could wish you not to think of me while you read the paragraph I am now beginning. You know many of our ministers, and you know that there are amongst them men of sound sense, solid judgment, and extensive reading: Men whom the Lord has been pleased to favour with an eminency in gifts and spiritual knowledge; in a word, able ministers of the New Testament; Men, who though in the sight of the Lord they lie low in the dust, conscious of inherent defilement, and that their best services need forgiveness; yet with regard to their fellow-creatures, can in the integrity of their hearts appeal to all around them, that their conversation is not unbecoming the gospel which they preach. Some of these men, at least, have carefully studied the subject matter of debate between us and the Dissenters, have read the books, and considered the arguments, which are supposed sufficient to convert and reform us; but after all their endeavours to obtain information, though they agree with the evangelical Dissenters in their views of the gospel (which yet they received not from them, but from the holy scriptures) they are still constrained to differ on the question of church form and order. Now why should this be imputed to their ignorance and blindness? Does it require a sharper eye to perceive the precise delineation of a gospel-church in the New Testament, if it be really there, than to apprehend and embrace what the scripture teaches concerning the person and characters of the Redeemer, the way of a sinner's acceptance, or the nature of the life of faith? These things, we are assured by the apostle, the natural man, however qualified, cannot discern. Surely the external form of a gospel-church cannot be equally mysterious with these doctrines; especially as it is professedly seen with the glance of an eye, by some persons who declare themselves enemies to mysteries of any kind. Or why should their not acceding to you be imputed to interested motives? There are with us men whose integrity and ingenuousness are in every other respect unimpeachable; and it is hard, that without sufficient evidence, they should be charged with prevarication in a business which concerns the honour of their Saviour, and the uprightness of their consciences in his sight. Besides, what can be the powerful motives for such hypocrisy? Do they by remaining in the establishment avoid the offence of the cross, and find a shelter from that opprobrium and opposition which must be their lot if they had the fortitude to unite with the Dissenters? Here at least, however, we may be mistaken. I apprehend the Lord has assigned to us the post of honour; and that in the treatment we meet with from an unbelieving world, our lot rather resembles that of the Dissenters of the last century than of the present. It is true, we are no more exposed to fines and imprisonment than you are; but if it be an honour to suffer shame for his name's sake, I think we have the pre-eminence. As to money-matters, I could name several of our clergy who are not so plentifully provided for in the establishment, but that if they were to leave us, and to go over to your side, it is very probable the manner in which converts of such characters and abilities would be received amongst you, might prove considerably to their emolument. Nor can it upon better grounds be ascribed to obstinate prejudice and incurable bigotry, that your arguments do not prevail. For it is well known, that many of our ministers show a cordial and liberal spirit to the Dissenters, receive them gladly into their houses, attend occasionally upon their preaching, recommend and encourage applications for the support of their ministers, or places of worship, and are ready to concur with them in every plan for usefulness. And I believe this disposition would be more general, had not experience shown that the candour of some clergymen in these respects, has been too often improperly requited by ungenerous attempts to prejudice and perplex our people, and to weaken our hands.

Yet one or another, or all these charges must be insinuated against us, rather than fallible men will suppose themselves any thing less than infallible, even in points of a circumstantial nature; and though others whom they have no reason to think inferior to themselves either in judgment or integrity, are compelled to differ from them.

> If not so frequent, would not this be strange?
> That 'tis so frequent—this is stranger still!

Be assured, dear sir, that in thus apologizing for my brethren, I write not only without their desire, but without their knowledge. I think I have now finished all my preambles, and I proceed immediately to acquaint you with my reasons for conforming to the Established Church, and continuing in it.

My first, and principal reason is, *The regard I owe to the honour and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ as Head and Lawgiver of his Church.* I do not mean that this consideration obliges me absolutely to prefer the form of the church of England to any other form, but only that it will not permit me to join with those who make dissenting from it necessary in point of conscience.

I cannot suppose that any true christian in our land of light and liberty, will hesitate a moment to acknowledge that Christ is the one infallible, authoritative legislator and governor of his church; that he is the Lord,

and the only Lord of conscience, and that nothing inconsistent with his revealed will should be practised, nothing that he has enjoined be omitted, by those who profess allegiance to him. But however generally acknowledged these principles are, I believe the misconstruction and misapplication of them have contributed more to divide the people of God, and to alienate their affections from each other, than any other cause that can be assigned. It seems reasonable to expect that they whose hopes are built upon the same foundation, who are led by the same spirit, who are opposed by the same enemies, and interested in the same promises, would look upon each other with mutual complacence, would love as brethren, would bear each other's burdens, and so fulfil their Master's law, and copy his example. But alas! a mistaken zeal for his honour fills them on all sides with animosity against their fellow disciples, splits them into a thousand parties, gives rise to fierce and endless contentions, and makes them so earnest for and against their respective peculiarities, that the love, which is the disriminating characteristic of his religion, is scarcely to be found amongst them in such a degree of exercise, as to satisfy even candid observers, whether they bear his mark or not.

The visible church of Christ comprises all who call themselves by his name, and who profess to receive his gospel as a divine revelation. It is a floor on which the grain and the chaff are promiscuously mingled; a field in which the wheat and the tares grow together; a net inclosing a multitude of fishes both good and bad. But the visible church of Christ, taken in this large extent, is not the proper subject of his government, as he is the King of saints. For his kingdom is a spiritual kingdom, which none can understand, and his rule is a spiritual rule, which none can receive or obey, until born from above, and made new creatures by the power of the Holy Spirit. If these regenerated persons, who, it is to be feared, are seldom the largest number in any denomination, be considered as detached from the visible church, the remainder is a mere *caput mortuum*, differenced from the world which lies in wickedness, in nothing but a name, and in the privilege of having the oracles of God committed to it. But nominal christians, though they have, or may have in their hands the scriptures, which are able to make sinners wise unto salvation, are no less distant and alienated from the life of God (until he is pleased to reveal his power in their hearts) than Mahomedans or Heathens. And with respect to these, the honour of the Lord Jesus Christ is but little concerned with the different ways in which they may think proper to constitute themselves into national or particular churches, and please themselves with a lifeless form of worship, while their hearts are in a state of enmity to his grace. Admitting that a plan of a gospel-church was described with the same precision in the New Testament, as the institutions of the Levitical worship in the Old, and punctually complied with to the minutest circumstance, though the worshippers might applaud and admire their own exactness, and censure and despise all who differed a hair's breadth from them, yet if they did not serve God in spirit and in truth, their boasted church-order would avail them nothing. All that related to the worship of God under the law, was confessedly of divine appointment; and the people in the time of the prophets were not so much charged with neglecting the prescribed forms, as with resting in them. When this evil became general, and they thought to compensate for their want of spirituality, by their feasts, fasts, and sacrifices, the Lord expresses himself as displeased with his own institutions, Isa. i. 11—15. lxvi. 3, 4. Jer. vii. 8—14, 22, 23. They could plead his prescription for their observances; but in vain they trusted to the temple, and said, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we," when the Lord of the temple was departed from them. And certainly he will be no more pleased with a form without the heart now, than he was then.

I must, therefore, confine my inquiry to the church of Christ in a more limited and proper sense, as expressive of his mystical body, composed of all who by faith are united to him as their foundation and root, of all to whom he is the head of vital influence, who have fellowship with him in his death, and are partakers of the power of his resurrection. These are infallibly known only to himself. They are scattered far and wide, separated from each other by seas and mountains; they are a people of many nations and languages. But wherever their lot is cast, they hear his voice, are under his gracious eye, and the life which they live in the flesh is by faith in his name. They have not all equal degrees of light or measures of grace, nor are they all favoured with equal advantages for knowing or enjoying the full extent of the liberty of the gospel. But they are all accepted in the Beloved, and approved of God. They are spiritual worshippers, joint partakers of grace, and will hereafter appear together at their Saviour's right hand in glory.

At present they are in an imperfect state. Though created anew in Christ Jesus, they are not freed from a principle of indwelling sin. Their knowledge is clouded by much remaining ignorance, and their zeal, though right in its aim, is often warped and misguided by the corrupt influence of self. For they still have many corruptions, and they

live in a world which furnishes frequent occasions of exciting them; and Satan, their subtle and powerful enemy, is always upon his watch to mislead and ensnare them. They are born, educated, and called under a great variety of circumstances. Habits of life, local customs, early connections, and even bodily constitution, have more or less influence in forming their characters, and in giving a tincture and turn to their manner of thinking. So that though, in whatever is essential to their peace and holiness, they are all led by the same Spirit, and mind the same things; in others of a secondary nature, their sentiments may, and often do differ, as much as the features of their faces. A uniformity of judgment among them is not to be expected while the wisest are defective in knowledge, the best are defiled with sin, and while the weaknesses of human nature which are common to them all, are so differently affected by a thousand impressions which are from their various situations. They might, however, maintain a unity of spirit, and live in the exercise of mutual love; were it not that every party, and almost every individual, unhappily conceives that they are bound in conscience to prescribe their own line of conduct as a standard to which all their brethren ought to conform. They are comparatively but few who consider this requisition to be as unnecessary, unreasonable, and impracticable, as it would be to insist, or expect that every man's shoes should be exactly of one size.

Thus, though all agree in asserting the authority and right of the Lord Jesus, as King and Head of his Church, the various apprehensions they frame of the rule to which he requires them to conform, and their pertinacious attachment to their own expositions of it, separate them almost as much from each other, as if they were not united to him by a principle of living faith. Their little differences form them into so many separate interests; and the heat with which they defend their own plans, and oppose all who cannot agree with them in a tittle, makes them forget that they are children in the same family, and servants of the same master. And while they vex and worry each other with disputations and censures, the world wonders and laughs at them all. The spirit of love is restrained, offences are multiplied, and Satan is gratified by beholding the extensive effects of his pernicious and long practised maxim, *Divide et impera.*

I am far from supposing that all the various modes of church-government under which spiritual worshippers are cast, are equally agreeable to the spirit and genius of the gospel, or equally suited to the purposes of edification. Perhaps there is no considerable body of people who profess themselves Christians, however erroneous in their plans of doctrine or worship, among whom the Saviour has not some hidden ones, known to himself, though lost to human observation in the crowd of pretenders which surround them. The power of his grace can break through all disadvantages, and make a few individuals wiser than their teachers, by revealing his truth to their heart, sooner or later, so far as is necessary to salvation. But it must be owned, that some communities which bear the name of Christian have departed so very far from the simplicity of the gospel, that if we reason *a priori*, we are ready to conclude it as almost impossible for a converted person to continue a single day in such a communion. But hypotheses cannot be maintained against plain facts. Thus the Church of Rome, not merely by adopting an unmeaning burdensome train of ceremonies, but by her doctrines of Papal infallibility, invocation of saints and angels, purgatory, absolution, the mass, and others of the like stamp, is become so exceedingly adulterated, that possibly some persons who may read these letters will form an unfavourable opinion of me, for declaring that I have not the least doubt but the Lord Jesus has had, from age to age, a succession of chosen and faithful witnesses within the pale of that corrupt church. Yet I should hope that they, who, having themselves tasted that the Lord is gracious, know the language of a heart under the influence of his Spirit, would, in defiance of Protestant prejudices, be of my mind, if they had opportunity of perusing the writings of some Papists. If such persons as Fenelon, Pascal, Quesnal, and Nicole, (to mention no more,) were not true christians, where shall we find any that deserve the name? In the writings of these great men, notwithstanding incidental errors, I meet with such strains of experimental godliness, such deep knowledge of the workings of the Spirit of God, and of the heart of man, and such masterly explications of many important passages of scripture, as might do honour to the most enlightened Protestant. And yet these men lived and died in the Popish communion; and, to their latest hours, (for any thing that appears to the contrary,) thought they could not separate from it without sin. And, though I have not equal means of information, I can as little doubt that the Lord has a people likewise in the Greek Church, which, as to its external frame, seems to be little less unscriptural than the Church of Rome itself.

However, I desire to be thankful that I am not a Papist. I am at least one step nearer to the true and acceptable worship of God. For I believe the most rigid of our Dissenting brethren will allow, that the Church of England, if almost, yet is not altogether so depraved and corrupt in its constitution as the church of Rome. I am now in my track

and shall trouble you with fewer digressions in the sequel. My next point will be to examine the different claims of Protestant churches to the honour they all assume, that their respective institutions are most conformable to the rules the apostles have laid down on the subject of church-government, and express the greatest regard to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, the undoubted Head and Lawgiver of his Church. And to avoid as much as I can, encumbering what I write in an epistolary way to a friend, with the stiffness of argumentation, I shall content myself with giving you a simple account of what occurred to me upon this head, when I made the inquiry for my own direction. But it is time to conclude this letter by assuring you that I am,

Your affectionate friend.

LETTER III.

My Dear Friend and Brother,—If the authority of men truly respectable for learning, judgment, and grace, were sufficient to determine the question, Which of the various forms of church-government now obtaining among Christians is most agreeable to the letter and spirit of the New Testament? a modest inquirer, who wishes for the sanction of those whom he esteems wiser and better than himself, would probably, without hesitation, join himself to that party to which he might be first led to apply for direction. For whatever difference there may be in the merit of their several claims for pre-eminence, the claim itself is made with an equal degree of confidence by them all. At a time when I was very sensible of my own incompetency to decide this point for myself, I received (as I hope) much benefit from the writings of Bishop Hall, Reynolds, Davenant, Mr. Hooker, and other divines of the Church of England. I perceived they were persons of strong sense, extensive literature, sound in the faith; and from such accounts of their lives as I could collect, I judged they had been zealous and diligent in their callings, and burning and shining lights in the world. I could not perceive that any of them were dissatisfied with the Established Church in which they lived and died; and some of them I found were very strenuous in its defence, not only pleading that it was lawful to maintain communion with it, but offering many arguments to prove that it was even sinful to separate from it, and that it was the only resemblance of the primitive apostolical church. I own to you that I thought some of their assertions upon this head were too strong, and some of their arguments not fully conclusive. Yet I was a little staggered, and it gave me pain to be forced to differ in any point from men whom I believed to have been full of faith and of the Holy Ghost. However, some general idea I possessed of the liberty of the gospel, a conviction that the Lord had a people and a work in other countries where the form of the Church of England could not take place, and the previous attachment I had to the Dissenters, with whom, as I have said, I was first acquainted, prevented me from becoming what is called a High-Church man. But as for these reasons I could not give the Church of England an exclusive preference, or think myself authorized to brand those who dissented from it with the hard names of schismatics and fanatics, so on the other hand, I could not go into the opposite extreme, or suppose that a church in which the Lord employed and owned such valuable men, and had a numerous spiritual people, was no better than a Babylon, from whence all who loved his name and salvation, were in duty and conscience bound to withdraw.

Many books likewise came in my way written by divines of the Church of Scotland. In the writings of Durham, Fleming, Halyburton, and others, I found proofs that they were not inferior in light, holiness, and a sound spiritual judgment, to the most eminent luminaries of our own Church. In what concerned the life and power of religion, I could perceive no considerable difference between them. As they were all taught by the same Spirit, so they were all teachers of the same truths. But in their sentiments upon church-government they differed very widely. Wherein they agreed, I could fully agree with them. Wherein they differed, I was left in the uncertainty of a traveller, who, inquiring his way of two persons, is told by one to turn to the right, and by the other directly opposite, to the left. My English guides would persuade me that the form of the church from the apostles' days was Episcopal. My Scotch guides were rather more positive that our prelacy was almost equally with the papacy, a branch and a mark of Antichrist. If I compared the sufficiency of each to decide for me, I knew not which to prefer. On both sides were men of wisdom and grace, and who I believed would not wilfully mislead me; on both sides they confessed themselves in general to be, like myself, fallible, and liable to mistake. Only in this one point both sides appeared confident, that they could not be mistaken, and yet their opinions were not only diverse, but contradictory.

The suspense in which I was held by these incompatible claimants, sent me more readily and attentively to renew my inquiries amongst my former friends of your denomination. By these I was instructed, that I need not trouble myself with weighing and comparing the arguments which the English and Scotch Churches had to offer in favour

of their respective constitutions, for they were both equally destitute of any foundation in truth or scripture: That I had only to read the New Testament for myself, and it must appear very plain, that the Lord Christ had not left a concern of this importance undetermined, but had directed his apostles to leave in their writings a pattern, according to which it was his pleasure all his churches in future ages should be formed: That the first churches were Congregational or Independent, and that every other plan was unscriptural, and a presumptuous deviation from the declared will of the Lord. As I had been a debtor to some of their writers likewise, and was personally acquainted with several of their ministers, their representation had so much weight with me as to increase my embarrassment.

My difficulties grew upon me, when I found, by consulting different Independent writers who had professedly treated this subject, that though they were of one mind in asserting that a plain and satisfactory pattern for this Congregational order might be easily collected and stated from a perusal of the New Testament; yet when they came to delineate and describe it according to their own idea, they were far from being agreed among themselves as to the nature and number of the officers, powers, and acts which are requisite to the constitution and administration of a regularly organized gospel-church. I formerly employed much time and attention in this disquisition; but not having for many years past reviewed a controversy which I think rather dry and uninteresting, I cannot from memory enter into a detail of particulars. Nor is it needful. Of the fact, I think I may be confident, that there is not such an agreement amongst them as might be expected, if the plan from which they all profess to copy was clearly and expressly revealed in the New Testament as obligatory upon all christians. Here I was at a loss again; for, if I could have admitted their principle, That every circumstance of worship and government in a church ought to have the warrant of a precept or a precedent from the scripture, still I needed help to digest and put together the several regulations which were dispersed in so many different parts of the Gospels and Epistles; for I found myself unable to frame the detached materials into one orderly structure by my own skill. But when they who professed to have the light which I wanted were themselves divided upon the point, I was precluded from the hope of any certain assistance; for as to probabilities and conjectures, I might as well depend upon my own, as upon those of another.

Nor was this the whole of my difficulty, I was honestly advised to read and examine for myself. I did so; and it appeared to me, by comparing what I read with what I saw, that the Independents could not, at least did not, keep closely to their own principles. I thought I met with usages in the churches planted by the apostles which did not obtain in any of the Congregational churches I was acquainted with; and, on the other hand, I noticed some usages among these of which I could find no traces in the inspired account we have of the primitive churches. Permit me, by way of specimen, to mention one instance in each kind. If it was necessary I could mention several, but I wish not to be tedious.

The apostle Paul addresses the Corinthians as a church of Christ; and we have from him a larger and more particular account of the practices of their church than of any other. In chap. xiv. of his first epistle, after censuring and correcting some improprieties which had obtained in their public assemblies, he gives them this direction: "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted." The general practice of the Congregational churches in our time, seems not to comply with this apostolic injunction. I think, my friend, in your assemblies, especially in your solemn stated worship on the Lord's day, there is seldom more than one speaker. The same minister who preaches, usually begins and ends the service. Should it be pleaded that the apostle speaks of prophesying, and evidently supposes that the church of Corinth was favoured with extraordinary gifts and revelations which are now ceased, and that therefore the rule cannot in that respect extend to us, I have two answers to make.

In the first place, though we do not expect extraordinary revelations, we have encouragement to hope for the presence of our Saviour, and the gracious influences of his Spirit, when we meet in his name, sufficient to enable us to speak to his praise, and to the edification and comfort of our brethren, if not in foreign tongues, at least in our own. And it is probable that you have more than once been a hearer in a public assembly, when your heart has been so warmed and impressed with the truths of the gospel, that you would not have been unwilling to have ascended the pulpit yourself, either to confirm or correct what you had been hearing, or to indulge the liberty you found in your mind upon some other important subject. Perhaps something was then revealed to you, which might have been very suitable to the occasion, and to the state of the congregation. Why did you not then declare it? Why did you neglect to stir up the gift of God that was in you? Would it have been contrary to the custom of your churches? But would you not, upon your

principles, have been justified by the custom of a New-Testament church, and the injunction of an apostle?

But, secondly, and chiefly, I answer, if it be admitted, that because the primitive churches had extraordinary gifts, there are some things in their practice which are not proper for our imitation,* who have not the same gifts; then I quite give up the hope of being able to determine the exact and invariable form of a church, by such lights as the Acts of the Apostles and their Epistles afford me; unless some man or set of men be qualified and commissioned to draw the line for me, and to show me distinctly how far, and in what instances, the state of the first christians is limited from being a pattern to us, by the extraordinary dispensations of that age; and how far, and in what cases, their pattern is binding upon us still, notwithstanding those dispensations have long since ceased. To be directed to study these churches as a model, and to be told at the same time, that some parts of their practice were not designed for the imitation of future ages, without distinctly specifying which were, and which were not, is rather the way to perplex and bewilder an inquirer, than to help him to information. Upon this ground, though I might refuse to trust the assumed infallibility of the Pope, I must feel the need of an infallible visible guide to reside somewhere in the church; for without such assistance I could not take a single step with certainty, but must be liable to stumble at the very threshold of my inquiry.

I think it is the usual practice in your churches, to require from all persons who wish to be admitted into your communion, an account, either verbal or written, of what is called their experience; in which, not only a declaration of their faith in the Lord Jesus, and their purpose, by grace, to devote themselves to him, is expected, but likewise a recital of the steps by which they were led to a knowledge and profession of the gospel. I select this as one instance in which I conceive you have neither precept nor precedent in the scripture for your warrant. A profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, of acceptance of him, and submission to him in his offices and characters, supported by the evidence of a gospel-conversation, should, I apprehend, be deemed sufficient to entitle a person to church-membership; and especially by those who so loudly insist upon the evil of superadding any regulations to those which are already provided by our Lord and his apostles. The authority which makes it a pre-requisite for admission, that a person shall relate how and when he was awakened, what exercises of mind he has passed through, and other particulars of a like nature, appears to me to be as merely human, as the authority which prescribes the canons of an established church. If the practice be defensible, it must be on the plea of expediency. It is not my present business to inquire how far it may be expedient for young converts, for young persons, especially for young women, to be compelled to speak before a public assembly; or if that be dispensed with for the sake of other interfering expediencies, how far it is expedient to trust to a written experience: otherwise I could say a good deal upon this head. But it is sufficient for my purpose, if no shadow of this practice can be found in the New-Testament. On the contrary, I read, that when Saul, after he escaped from Damascus, essayed to join himself to the disciples, it was Barnabas and not Saul* himself, who informed them both of his conversion, and of the extraordinary manner in which it was effected, subjoining a testimony of his conduct from the time that he professed a change. But if expediency may warrant a measure in your churches not expressly commanded, why not likewise in ours? Be it either right or wrong in one case, it must be so in both. And therefore my remark on this particular will at least have the force of *argumentum ad hominem*.

I am afraid I shall weary you by only giving a brief account of the long and intricate road which I travelled, to discover, if I could, the best constituted church. But I must entreat your patience a little longer, till I bring you to the end of my journey. It may be necessary to inform some of my readers, though not you, that a considerable part of the congregational churches differ from the rest, with respect to the mode and subjects of baptism. At the time when my thoughts were most engaged about church-order, I lived in intimate habits of friendship with several Baptists, who were very willing to assist me in settling my judgment. These, though they would have been pleased to see me yield to the arguments of their Pædobaptist brethren, would not be satisfied that I should stop where they stopped. They urged scripture precepts and precedents to lead me farther; and said, that none of the Congregational churches but their own were agreeable to the mind of Christ. They told me, that though I should acknowledge and embrace the Congregational order, which undoubtedly was the only one countenanced by scripture, still I could not be right till I had renounced what I called the baptism I had received in my infancy, and submitted (as they termed it) to baptism by immersion, to which I was bound not only by the practice of the primitive church, but by the example of our Lord himself, who when he

* See Neale's History of the Puritans. Vol. I. p. 379. 2d edit. 1732.

* See Dr. Guyse on Acts ix. 27.

was baptized, said for our instruction, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

I own, Sir, that if I had seen it my duty to accede to the church-order of the Independents, I know not but their principles would have led me from them again, to join with the Baptists. How they, who, maintaining infant-baptism, press scripture precedent so strongly upon me, answer the Baptists, who in this point press it as strongly upon themselves, is not my concern. I did not stand upon the same ground, and therefore the arguments of the Baptist did not much affect me. I thought the example of our Lord pleaded as much for circumcision as for baptism. I question whether I, a poor sinner, had any call to imitate him in those things which it became him as our Surety to perform, in order to fulfil all righteousness. It appeared to me that John's baptism and the christian baptism were different; and though the Baptists assured me that they were the same, I was not convinced. I thought they were plainly distinguished in Acts xix. 2—5. And I was grieved by the attempts of some wise and good men to wrest a sense from that passage, so contrary to its plain and obvious meaning, merely to support a favourite scheme. And as the form of christian baptism is laid down in express words, Matt. xxviii. 19, I must continue to think it different from the baptism of John, till I can have sufficient proof that John baptized our Saviour in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

I found likewise that the Baptists, though unanimous against us, and even against those who in every point but one agree with them, were divided among themselves. Some of them, while they practise what they think a duty, do not so peremptorily prescribe it to others, as to make it an indispensible term of communion; but they will receive a person as a church-member whom they judge to be sound in the faith, and of a good conversation, though they consider him, in strictness of speech, as unbaptized. But others are much hurt by this concession, and bear testimony against it as unscriptural and wrong. Their views are so strict that if they certainly knew that a person who wished to communicate with them was the most eminent christian in the land, unless he was likewise baptized in their manner, they could not, they durst not admit him to the Lord's table, to eat of that bread and to drink of that cup which is by his command and appointment, the privilege and portion of all believers. This difference of judgment between them has been thought so important, that the reasons for and against, and their mutual censures of each other, have been laid before the public, by good men on each side of the question.

Now, my dear friend, upon this state of the case, what could I do? I had reviewed and compared the sentiments of a number of respectable writers and ministers of different names. In essentials I agreed with them all, and in circumstantials I differed no more from any of them, then they differed among themselves. They all confessed they were fallible, yet they all decided with an air of infallibility; for they all in their turns expected me to unite with them, if I had any regard to the authority and honour of the Lord Jesus as Head of the church. But the very consideration they proposed restrained me from uniting with any of them. For I cannot think that I should honour the headship and kingly office of Christ, by acknowledging him as the Head of a party and subdivision of his people to the exclusion of the rest. Every party uses fair sounding words of liberty; but when an explanation is made, it amounts to little more than this—that they will give me liberty to think as they think, and to act as they act; which to me, who claim the same right of thinking for myself and of acting according to the dictates of my own conscience, is no liberty at all. I therefore came to such conclusions as these—that I would love them all—that I would hold a friendly intercourse with them all, so far as they should providentially come in my way; but that I would stand fast in the liberty with which Christ had made me free, and call none of them master—in fine, that if others sought to honour him by laying a great stress on matters of doubtful disputation, my way of honouring him should be by endeavouring to show that his kingdom is not of this world, nor consists in meats and drinks, in pleading for forms and parties, but in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; and that neither circumcision is any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature, and the faith which worketh by love. There was a time when I could have joined with the Dissenters, if the providence of God had opened my way to them; but farther experience and observation have so far altered my judgment, that had I my choice to make again, it seems to me, that I could no more officiate as a minister among any people who insist upon other terms of communion than those which our Lord has appointed, faith and holiness, than I could subscribe to the dogmas of the Council of Trent. My regard to his honour will not allow me to exclude any whom I believe he has been pleased to receive. Thus much for the first reason of my conformity. Yet in justice to the non-conformists I must add, that if I wish to avail myself of the sanction of great names, I could mention some among them, who, if they were now living, I am persuaded would not blame me for conforming, though they could not in conscience do it themselves. Particularly I judge thus (from many of his writings) of the truly great Mr. Howe, whose praise is in all the churches. I am sincerely yours, &c

LETTER IV.

My Dear Friend and Brother,—I have given you the chief reason why I am not a Dissenter; and it appears to me a sufficient one, though I could assign no other. I have, however, two or three more to offer you, but I hope to comprise them all within the compass of this letter. For indeed I begin to be weary of a subject which is not quite suitable to my taste and inclination. But it seems not unseasonable, and I hope may not be unuseful to show you that the preference I have given to the Church of England, is not the effect either of inconsideration or prejudice.

My second reason for not being a Dissenter is, *Because I highly value the right of private judgment, and my liberty as a man and as a Christian.* Here again I think we are agreed in principle. You rejoice in the name of a Protestant Dissenter, as setting you free from the shackles and impositions of men; and probably think of me and my brethren in the Establishment, with a degree of friendly pity; taking it for granted, that the engagements we are under hold us in a painful state of subjection and bondage, from which you charitably wish to see us released.

We are obliged to persons of your candid disposition for your sympathy and good wishes; and we repay you in kind. As we cannot think exactly alike, this seems the best method we can take. Harsh censures and angry disputations would be unbecoming our profession, and hurtful to our spirits; but it can do us no harm to pity and pray for each other. Perhaps you are ready to say, "You would surely pity me if you knew all my inward and outward trials; but you need not pity me for being a Dissenter, because I account it my great privilege." I may say the same, with the alteration of one word. If you knew the evils which I feel within, and the snares and difficulties which beset me from without, you would pity me indeed. But that I exercise my ministry in the Church of England, appears to me, as things stand, to be rather a subject for congratulation than compassion. I cannot become a Dissenter till I am weary of my liberty. If you please we will compare notes upon this head.

Let me first speak of the restraints we are under. I am bound, by my subscription, to the forms and rubric of the Common Prayer; but my subscription was really *ex animo.* I approve the service, and therefore it is no burden to me to use it. I do not consider it as faultless, nor can I subscribe to any book of human composition in the same absolute manner as I would to the Bible. But by assenting to our church-ritual I give up less of my own private judgment for the sake of peace, than I should by espousing the rules and practices of any Dissenting churches I am acquainted with. Again, having accepted a designation to the cure of souls, my public ministry is thereby confined to parish churches, and I cannot, consistently with what I conceive to be the import of my voluntary engagements, preach at random, and in all places without reserve. But this is no restraint upon my conscience. While I have the example of our Lord and his apostles in my view, I cannot doubt the lawfulness of preaching on mountains or plains, in market-places, or on the sea-shore. But things in themselves lawful are not always, nor to all persons expedient. I approve of parochial order. I interfere not with the conduct of others; but believe it is, upon the whole, best for me to confine myself to the duties of my own charge, and to such opportunities of preaching in parochial pulpits as may occasionally offer. Between the one and the other I have sufficient employment. And though the Bishop who ordained me laid me under no restrictions, I would not have applied to him for ordination, if I had not been previously determined to submit to his authority and to the rules of the church. I thought, and still think it my duty to preserve a consistency of character; for I was not ordained to be an apostle or evangelist, to spread the gospel throughout a kingdom, but to take care of the particular flock committed to my charge. But I need not enlarge upon this point, as I think the Dissenters do not in general by their practice countenance what we call irregularity, but are almost as seldom seen preaching in the fields, or by the way-sides, as the most regular of our clergy; though they cannot plead our reasons for not doing it, and are certainly not restrained either by the precepts or precedents of the New Testament.

Nor am I under any disagreeable constraint from my superiors in the church. The Archdeacon in his district, and the Bishop in his diocese, hold their respective visitations; the former annually, the latter once in three years. At these visitations the clergy (especially in the country) are expected to attend. On these occasions we answer to our names, hear a sermon or a charge, and usually dine together. There is nothing painful to me in paying these tokens of respect to my acknowledged superiors, and receiving marks of civility from them. At all other times, while we keep within the limits which I have already told you, I subscribed and consented to *ex animo*, we scarcely know, at least we do not feel that we have any superiors. So far as I am concerned, I have reason to acknowledge that the administration of our church-government is gentle and liberal. I have from the first preached my sentiments with the greatest freedom. I always acted in the parishes which I have served, according

to my own judgment: and I have done some things which have not the sanction of general custom, but I never met with the smallest check, interference, or mark of displeasure from any of my superiors in the church, to this hour. Such are my restraints, and such is my liberty. I am bound by no regulations but what I myself approve; and within these boundaries I do as I please, no man forbidding or controlling me.

Indeed I have often thought that I have as good a right to the name of Independent as yourself. Neither you nor I would assume it to the prejudice of our dependence upon our Lord and Saviour; and, with respect to the influence of men, perhaps we have the advantage of you. I think we are more dependent of our brethren, and more independent of our people.

Though according to your plan every particular church is called independent, as possessing and exercising every kind of church power within itself, and not subject to the control of any other Christian society; yet, considering you as a body, or (according to the modern phrase) an interest, there is a kind of union and association among your ministers, which has a greater effect than some people are aware of, and which I apprehend may in some instances be rather unfriendly to the liberty you so highly prize. Some of your ministers, from their situation or connection have more influence than others. They have opportunities of assisting poorer ministers, and are, I suppose, in many cases, the judges whether they shall be assisted or not, and how far. They who best know human nature, are best qualified to judge how far the professed independence of your churches may be abated by this influence of connection; and whether the weight of a board of ministers may not be occasionally felt by those who pity us for being subordinate to a bench of Bishops. I own, I have upon some occasions been led to compare your ministers to a company of soldiers in their exercise, where every one must move in a prescribed line, keep the same pace, and make the like motions with the rest, on pain of being treated as refractory. Ministers in the establishment know nothing of these restraints. We are connected in love, but not upon system. We profess the same leading principles and aims, but each one acts singly and individually for himself.

I think we are likewise more independent of our people. The constitution of your churches, which you suppose the only one agreeable to the scripture, appears to me faulty, in giving a greater power to the people than the scripture authorizes. There is doubtless a sense in which ministers are not only the servants of the Lord, but, for his sake, the servants of the churches; but it is a service which implies rule, and is entitled to respect. Thus the apostle says, "Obey them that have rule over you." Their office is that of a steward, who is neither to lord it over the household, nor to be entirely under subjection to it, but to superintend and provide for the family. Scriptural regulations are wisely and graciously adapted to our state of infirmity; but I think the power which the people with you claim, and attempt to exercise, is not so. Many of them, though truly gracious persons, may, notwithstanding, from their situation in life, their want of education, and the narrowness of their views, be very incapable of government; yet when a number of such are associated according to your plan, under the honourable title of a Church of Christ, they acquire a great importance. Almost every individual conceives himself qualified to judge and to guide the minister; to sift and scrutinize his expressions, and to tell him how and what he ought to preach. But the poorer part of your flocks are not always the most troublesome. The rich can contribute most to the minister's support, who is often entirely dependent upon his people for a maintenance; their riches likewise give them some additional weight and influence in the church; and the officers, whom you call the Deacons, are usually chosen from among the more wealthy. But it is not always found that the most wealthy church members are the most eminent, either for grace or wisdom. We may be rather sure that riches, if the possessors are not proportionably humble and spiritual, have a direct tendency to nourish the worms of self-conceit and self-will. Such persons expect to be consulted, and that their judgment shall be followed. The preaching must be suited to their taste and sentiment; and if any thing is either enforced or censured which bears hard upon their conduct, they think themselves ill-treated. Although a faithful minister, in his better hours, disdains the thought of complying with the caprice of his hearers, or conniving at their faults, yet human nature is weak, and it must be allowed, that in such circumstances, he stands in a state of temptation. And if he has grace to maintain his integrity, yet it is painful and difficult to be obliged frequently to displease those on whom we depend, and who in some other respects may be our best friends and benefactors. I can truly say, that my heart has been grieved for the opposition, neglect, and unkindness, which some valuable men among you have to my knowledge met with, from those who ought to have esteemed them very highly for their work's sake. The effects of this supreme power lodged in the people, and of the unsanctified spirit in which it has been exercised, have been often visible in the divisions and subdivisions which have crumbled large societies into separate handfuls, if I may so

speak. And to this I am afraid, rather than to the spread of a work of grace, may be ascribed, in many instances, the great increase of the number of your churches of late years. Now, in the Establishment, we know but little of these difficulties: we are not so much at the mercy of our hearers for our subsistence; and though we probably preach to some who are wiser and better, as well as richer than ourselves, we have no hearers who assume a right to direct us, or whom we should stand in fear of, if they did. For my own part, I wish to have a spirit willing to profit by a hint, even from a child, and to pay attention to the advice of any person who speaks to me in love, and in a right temper. But humble loving christians are more disposed to find fault with themselves than with their minister, and to receive instruction than to offer it. But should a conformist to the world, or a zealot for a party, expect me to accommodate my preaching to his practice, or to his Shibboleth, I could give him an answer without being afraid of consequences.

I may add, that I apprehend we have more liberty with respect to our pulpits. At least I remember to have heard sermons from some of your pulpits, the strain of which has been so very different from the professed sentiments of the proper pastor of the church, that I have thought to myself, How came this minister to preach in this place? Upon inquiry I have found at one time, that the gentleman belonged to the *connexion;* at another, that he was asked to preach at the desire of a principal person in the church or congregation, who it seems approved him, though I was persuaded the pastor did not.

I esteem it likewise a branch of my christian liberty, that I can hear whom I please, and form what acquaintance I please, among the various denominations of Christians, without being called to account for it. I hope the Dissenters are likewise growing more into this liberty. However, as I know some among your people who would willingly hear us occasionally, were they not afraid of their ministers; so I know some of your ministers who would be willing to hear us, but do not, because they are afraid of their people.

Thus much (though more might be said) by way of comparing our advantages in point of liberty. I am well pleased with my lot; if you are equally pleased with yours, I am glad of it. I write only on the defensive, I neither expect nor wish to alter your views. Enjoy your liberty; only allow me to enjoy and be thankful for mine.

I have now acquainted you with my two principal reasons for not being a Dissenter. The first concerned my conscience. For though my regard to the authority of the great Lord and Lawgiver of the church did not directly oblige me to unite with the Establishment, it discouraged me from uniting with any of the parties, who pretended an exclusive right from him to enforce their own particular church-forms. When conscience did not interfere, my second reason though rather of a prudential kind, was of considerable weight with me. I loved liberty, and therefore gave a preference to the Church of England, believing I might in that situation exercise my ministry with the most freedom. I have made the experiment, and have no reason to repent of it. These points being cleared, my way was open to attend to another consideration which had a farther influence in determining my mind. This, I am about to offer to you as a third reason for my being where I am—*The probability of greater usefulness.* This probability, as to myself, and to others who can conform with a good conscience, seemed to lie on the side of the Establishment upon several accounts.

1. Great multitudes in this Christian nation (so called) are grossly ignorant of the first principles of religion, inattentive to the worth and welfare of their souls, and lamentably destitute of the proper means of instruction. I hoped for opportunities in the Establishment of preaching to many who could not hear the Dissenters. The children of God, known to himself, are scattered abroad far and wide. And as faith more usually comes by hearing, I admire his condescension and goodness in permitting his ministers to think differently on some external points, that they may with an upright heart serve him in the different departments of his vineyard. They who are Dissenters upon principle, would act against their judgments and consciences, were they to conform for the sake of usefulness. I am well content that they should remain as they are. But it has proved a mercy to thousands, that all who are called and qualified to preach the gospel, are not like-minded in this respect.

2. The spirit of bigotry and prejudice is too prevalent on all sides. As there are Dissenters who would think it sinful to be seen within the walls of a church, so there are other persons who place a principal part of their religion in an ignorant attachment to our forms, and could not easily be prevailed upon to enter within the doors of a meeting-house. But their prepossession in favour of our churches gives the minister who can conscientiously meet them there a great advantage *ad hominem*, by confirming the truths of the gospel (which when first declared are generally disliked and opposed) from the tenor of our liturgy and Articles, to which they profess some regard. A large part of our auditories, especially in places where the gospel is considered as a novelty, consists of persons of this description. But the Lord has been pleased in very many instances to honour our service amongst them with his

blessing. By the power of his spirit the truth is made manifest to their hearts, they are turned from darkness to light, and from the bondage of sin, to serve the living God. Then their former prejudices subside; insomuch that many, who once despised and hated the Dissenters, have been afterwards persuaded to join with them. The Dissenting interest would probably have been much weaker than it is at present, if it had not been strengthened by the accession of many church-members, and more than a few of your teachers and pastors, who had no inclination to hear your ministers, until they were first awakened under ours. The words of our Lord may in this sense be applied to many of your churches: "Other men laboured, and ye have entered into the fruits of their labours." The aim of my ministry, I trust, is not to promote the interests of a party, but to win souls to Christ. We have, however, the comfort to find, that a number are not only called, but edified and established by the blessing of God on our preaching; and that many of the most judicious and spiritual of our people, are proof against the insinuations which prevail on some to forsake the Church of England in hopes of enjoying a purer and more acceptable worship among the Dissenters. As to those who do leave us, if they are truly benefited, if they really grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord, in humility, meekness, benevolence, and deadness to the world, more among you, than they would have done amongst us, I can sincerely rejoice. But I think your brethren have no just reason to be either displeased or sorry, that God has raised up ministers to preach to thousands to whom they would never have had access.

3. I saw likewise, that the Lord had been pleased of late years to return by the power of his Spirit to the Church of England, which I believe many Dissenters thought he had so utterly forsaken that he would return no more. This leads me to a tender point, and I wish to touch upon it with great tenderness. We have none of us any thing to boast of. Our warmest exertions in the service of such a Master are far too cold; and our greatest success falls very short of what we ought to pray for. We preach no other gospel than you do. We love and respect many of your ministers for their knowledge, piety, and exemplary conversation. But I believe you will allow, that the general state of your churches at present, is not so lively and flourishing as it was in the days of the old nonconformists. I believe the best of your people were long ago sensible of a decline, that they sincerely lamented it, and earnestly prayed for a revival. Their prayers were at length answered, but not in the way they expected. A great and spreading revival of religion took place, but the instruments were not Dissenters. At the time when I was ordained, there was a considerable number of regular parochial ministers who preached the doctrines of the Reformation. The number has been greatly increased since, and is still increasing. I could not but judge, that the Lord's presence with his word in awakening sinners, and in applying it with power to the heart, was more evident and striking on this side, than on yours. Not because we are better than you; but because the work with us is rather new, whereas amongst you it is of an older date. The history of the Church of God and of human nature in past ages, teaches us to expect that revivals of religion will seldom stand long at their primitive height, but will gradually subside and degenerate, till things return in a course of time nearly to their former state; though a name, perhaps first imposed as a stigma by the world, and a form which owed all its value to the spirit that once enlivened it, may still remain. I wish I could affirm that none who were otherwise competent judges of a revival, have been prevented by their prepossessions from rejoicing in what God has wrought among us. But I fear it has been otherwise, and that a spirit of prejudice and party discovered itself upon the occasion, which proved hurtful to some good men. When I think of the abilities and characters of some Dissenting ministers, I cannot but ascribe the little visible success they meet with, in some measure, to their unwillingness to acknowledge a work of God in which they themselves were not employed. Their exceptions were not wholly groundless: A lively zeal for the glory of God, and the good of souls, in persons whose judgments were not fully ripened by observation and experience, did not secure them from incidental mistakes and blemishes. These were easily seen and eagerly noticed. A desire of being free from the least suspicion of giving countenance to the unguarded, though well meant sallies of active spirits, seems to have led some of your ministers into a contrary extreme; and their public discourses, though solid and judicious compositions, lost that animation in delivery, which is in some degree necessary to engage attention, and to keep up an auditory. Thus, while preachers much inferior to them for learning and general knowledge in divinity have had crowded assemblies, the pleasure with which I have heard some of your most eminent ministers, has been often abated by observing that the number of the hearers has been much smaller than the number of pews in the place. I must therefore confess that one consideration which deterred me from joining the Dissenters was, a fear lest the love of peace, and a temper rather compliant, might insensibly betray me into an over cautious spirit, damp my zeal, or divert it into a wrong channel,

and thereby prevent the success at which I aimed. I rather chose to unite with those people whom I thought the most likely to maintain and encourage what little fervour I possessed; and where I saw the most evident tokens of a power from on high accompanying the public ministrations. And as I had my reasons likewise for not being an Itinerant, a regular and stated charge in the Established church engaged my preference.

My fourth reason (the last I think it necessary to mention) being rather a point of experience, must depend chiefly upon my own testimony, and therefore I need not enlarge much upon it. Superadded, however, to those which I have already stated, it greatly contributed to give full satisfaction to my mind: I mean, the proofs I had, that the Lord, by the openings and leadings of his providence, pointed out to me the situation in which I was to serve him. The first explicit notice I gave of my desire to enter the ministry, was to an intimate friend in your denomination, nearly six years before I was ordained. In the course of this interval I made, and I received a variety of applications and proposals; but every thing failed, and every door by which I sought admission remained shut against me. I have already observed, that this state of suspense gave me leisure to examine the subject of church government more closely, and that the result of my disquisitions was the gradual, and at length the complete removal of the difficulties and exceptions I had at first hastily imbibed against the Establishment. At length the Lord's time came; then obstacles apparently unsurmountable suddenly and unexpectedly disappeared. Then I learnt the reason of former disappointments. My way had been mercifully hedged up with thorns, to prevent me taking a wrong course, and to keep me waiting until the place and service of his own appointment were prepared and ready for me. The coincidence of many circumstances which I cannot explain to another, gave me a very comfortable sense of the Lord's guidance. I received ordination in the Church of England with a πλήρωσις, with wind and tide (if I may so speak) in my favour, with the most pleasing disposition of outward events, and the most assured persuasion in my own mind, that I was following the call, and doing the will of God; of which I had at that time little more doubt than if an angel had been sent from heaven to tell me so. Nor have I hesitated upon the point a single hour from that day to this.

I think you will not be sorry to find that I am drawing towards a close. Indeed I should be ashamed to have written so much merely on my own account. I began this ideal correspondence with you about seven years ago. More than the one half of it was then written in a few weeks; but I felt a reluctance to proceed, because it seemed to be so much my own affair; but I have frequently thought since, that something upon the subject, written in a moderate and friendly spirit (which it has been my prayer and endeavour to preserve) might, by the Lord's blessing, be a mean of promoting candour and benevolence among those, who, whatever else they differ in, have one Lord, one faith, one hope. A desire of being instrumental in so good a work, has at length prevailed on me, to revise what I had begun, to add what I thought farther necessary for completing my design, and to send it abroad. I cannot give you particular reasons why I have not done it sooner, or why I do it now. Our times, plans, and purposes are under a superior guidance and direction, which it is our duty and our privilege always to acknowledge, though we cannot always distinctly discern it. I shall be happy if the event shall prove that I have been led to choose the fittest time and to offer a word in season. They who love and preach the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, whatever name they bear among men, and whatever body of people they are united to, are engaged in one common cause; they are opposed by the same enemies; their severest conflicts and their sweetest comforts are derived from the same sources; and they will ere long meet in the same kingdom of glory, and join in the same songs of eternal praise, to him who sitteth upon the throne, and to him who redeemed us to God by his blood. How desirable then is it, that while we live here, we should be at peace amongst ourselves, and live in the spirit of that love (the only infallible mark of our being truly the servants of Christ) which seeketh not its own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, but beareth, hopeth and believeth all things.

As what I write to you is to appear in print, I think it proper to add, for my own sake, that my whole intention will be fulfilled by the publication. I do not mean to enter into controversy; and therefore if these letters, contrary to my wish, should raise me an opponent, and give occasion to an answer, I shall not think myself bound to reply, unless I could be convicted of such a wilful misrepresentation, as would render it my duty to ask pardon of God, and of the Public.

I commend you and yours to the blessing of our Lord, and remain,

Your affectionate friend.

March 1, 1784.

A PLAN

OF

ACADEMICAL PREPARATION FOR THE MINISTRY,

IN A

LETTER TO A FRIEND.

Quin et piorum mentibus mysteria,
Contempta pravis, impie sapientibus
Occulta, Dominus luce proferet sua,
Et sacrosancti fœderis scientiam
Docebit.———— BUCH. PS. XXV.

The wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable.
JAMES iii. 17.

DEAR SIR,—I am not the son of a prophet, nor was I bred up among the prophets. I am quite a stranger to what passes within the walls of colleges and academies. I was as one born out of due time, and led, under the secret guidance of the Lord, by very unusual steps, to preach the faith which I once laboured to destroy. Since you know all this, how could you think of applying to me for the plan of an academical institution? Yet I confess the design you mentioned to me, in which some of your friends have thoughts of engaging, is so important in my view, that I am willing to come as near to your wishes as I can. I must not pretend to dictate a plan for the business which is now in contemplation. But if you will allow me to indulge a sort of reverie, and suppose myself a person of some consequence in Utopia, where I could have the modelling of every thing to my own mind; and that I was about to form an academy there, for the sole purpose of educating young men for the ministry of the gospel—in this way I am willing to offer you my thoughts upon the subject with great simplicity and freedom. And if any of the regulations of my imaginary academy should be judged applicable to your design, you and your friends will be heartily welcome to them.

I should then, *suppositis supponendis*, in the first place, lay down two or three important maxims, which I would hope never to lose sight of in the conduct of the affair: expecting that, if I should begin without them, I must stumble at the very threshold; and that whenever I should neglect them afterwards, all my care and labour and expense would be from that time thrown away.

My first maxim is, That none but he who made the world can make a minister of the gospel. If a young man has capacity, culture and application may make him a scholar, a philosopher, or an orator. But a true minister must have certain principles, motives, feelings, and aims which no industry or endeavours of men can either acquire or communicate. They must be given from above, or they cannot be received.

I adopt as a second maxim, That the holy scriptures are both comprehensively and exclusively the grand treasury of all that knowledge which is requisite and sufficient, to make the minister, the man of God, thoroughly furnished for every branch of his office. If indeed no other studies were of subordinate importance, in order to a right understanding of the scriptures, and especially to those who are not only to know for themselves, but are appointed to teach others also; then academical instruction would be needless, and I might supply my young men with every thing at once, by putting the Bible into their hands, and directing them to read it continually with attention and prayer. But my meaning is, that though there is such a concatenation in knowledge, that every branch of science may, by a judicious application, be rendered subservient to a minister's great design; yet no attainments in philology, philosophy, or in any or all the

particulars which constitute the aggregate of what we call Learning, can in the least contribute to form a minister of the gospel, any farther than he is taught of God to refer them to, and to regulate them by the scriptures as a standard. On the contrary, the more a man is furnished with this kind of apparatus, unless the leading truths of scripture reign and flourish in his heart, he will be but the more qualified to perplex himself, and to mislead his hearers.

My third maxim is an inference from the two former: That the true gospel-minister who possesses these secondary advantages, though he may know the same things, and acquire his knowledge by the like methods, as other scholars do, yet he must know and possess them in a manner peculiar to himself. His criticisms, if he be a critic, will discover something which the greatest skill in grammatical niceties cannot of itself reach. If he be an orator, he will not speak in the artificial self-applauding language of man's wisdom, but in simplicity and with authority; like one who feels the ground he stands upon, and knows to whom he belongs, and whom he serves. If he mentions a passage of history, it will not be to show his reading, but to illustrate or prove his point; and it will be evident from his manner of speaking, that though he may have taken the facts from Tacitus or Robertson, his knowledge of the springs of human action, and of the superintendency of a divine providence, is derived from the word of God. And so of other instances.

In a word, if a young man was to consult me how he might be wise and learned in the usual sense of the words, I might advise him to repair to Oxford or Cambridge, or to twenty other places which I could name. But if I thought him really desirous of becoming wise to win souls, I would invite him to my new college in Utopia.

From these general observations I proceed more directly to my subject. You are then to suppose that I have taken my determination, and counted the cost, and am now sitting down to contrive my plan. As a little attention to method may not be amiss, I shall endeavour to range my thoughts under four principal heads, concerning,

1. The Place.
2. The Tutor.
3. The Pupils.
4. The Course of Education.

I. And first, (as preachers sometimes say,) of the first. If the metropolis of Utopia should be any thing like ours, there are obvious reasons to forbid my fixing upon a spot very near it. I think not nearer than a moderate day's journey. Nor would I wish it much farther distant. Occasional visits to a great city where there are many considerable [illegible] and Christians, should not be rendered impracticable; as they might furnish my young men with opportunities of forming connections and making observations that might contribute to their usefulness in future life. But *procul ab urbe* will be my maxim. I should not only fear lest they should be contaminated by the vices which too generally prevail where men live in a throng: if they escaped these, I should still have apprehensions, lest the notice that might be taken of them, and the respect shown them by well-meaning friends, should imperceptibly seduce them into a spirit of self-importance, give them a turn for dress and company, and spoil that simplicity and dependence, without which I could have little hope of their success. I would wish it may be their grand aim to please the Lord, and under him and for his sake to please their tutor. They have as yet no business with other people. Their tutor must be to them *instar omnium.* Him they must love, reverence, and obey, and accurately watch his looks, and every intimation of his will. But to secure this point, or even to have a reasonable prospect of attaining it, methinks it seems necessary to say, *procul, procul ab urbe juvenes!* But the difference between a rural and a town situation is so striking at first view, that I suppose it quite needless to say more upon this head. I therefore proceed,

II. To the choice of my Tutor.—Whoever he may be, when I have found him, and fixed him, I will take the liberty to tell him, that he is called to the most honourable and important office that man, in the present state of things, is capable of. The skilful and faithful tutor is not only useful to his pupils considered as individuals, but he is remotely the instrument of all the blessings and benefits which the Lord is pleased to communicate by their ministry, in the course of their stated and occasional labours to the end of life. On the other hand, the errors and prejudices of an incompetent tutor, adopted and perpetuated by his disciples, may produce a long progression of evil consequences, which may continue to operate and multiply when he and they are dead and forgotten. For if the streams which are to spread far and wide throughout a land are poisoned in the very source, who can foresee how far the mischief may be diffused. Unless, therefore, I can procure a proper tutor, I must give up my design. It is better the youth should remain untaught, than that they should be taught to do wrong.

And I seem not easily satisfied on this head. My idea of the person to whom I could cheerfully entrust the care of my academy, is not of an ordinary size. He seems to be one,

——Qualem nequeo monstrare, ac sentio tantum.

However, since we are upon Utopian

ground, where we may imagine as largely as we please, I will attempt to delineate him. And were I to recommend a tutor to your friends, it should be the man who I thought came the nearest to the character I am about to describe.

For his first essential indispensable qualification, I require a mind deeply penetrated with a sense of the grace, glory, and efficacy of the gospel. However learned and able in other respects, he shall not have a single pupil from me, unless I have reason to believe, that his heart is attached to the person of the Redeemer as God-man: that as a sinner his whole dependence is upon the Redeemer's work of love, his obedience unto death, his intercession and mediatorial fulness. His sentiments must be clear and explicit respecting the depravity of human nature, and the necessity and reality of the agency of the Holy Spirit, to quicken, enlighten, sanctify, and seal those who, under his influence, are led to Jesus for salvation. With respect to the different schemes or systems of Divinity which obtain amongst those who are united in the acknowledgment of the above fundamental truths, I should look for my tutor amongst those who are called Calvinists; but he must not be of a curious, metaphysical, disputatious turn, a mere system-monger or party-zealot. I seek for one who, having been himself taught the deep things of God by the Holy Spirit, in a gradual experimental manner; while he is charmed with the beautiful harmony and coincidence of all the doctrines of grace, is at the same time aware of the mysterious depths of the divine counsels, and the impossibility of their being fully comprehended by our feeble understandings. Such a man will be patient and temperate in explaining the peculiarities of the gospel to his pupils, and will wisely adapt himself to their several states, attainments, and capacities. After the example of the Great Teacher, he will consider what they can bear, and aim to lead them forward step by step, in such a manner, that the sentiments he instils into them may be their own, and not taken up merely upon the authority of his *ipse dixit*. He will propose the scripture to them as a consistent whole; and guard them against the extremes into which controversial writers have forced themselves and each other, in support of a favourite hypothesis, so as, under pretence of honouring some parts of the word of God, to overlook, if not to contradict, what is taught with equal clearness in other parts.

I wish my pupils to be well versed in useful learning, and therefore my tutor must be a learned man. He must not only be able to teach them whatever is needful for them to learn, but should be possessed of such a fund, as that the most forward and most promising among them may feel he has a decided superiority over them in every part of their studies. Besides an accurate skill in the school classics, he should be well acquainted with books at large, and possessed of a general knowledge of the state of literature and religion, and the memorable events of history in the successive ages of mankind. Particularly, he should be well versed in Ecclesiastical learning: for though it be true, that the bulk of it is little worth knowing for its own sake, yet a man of genius and wisdom will draw from the whole mass a variety of observations suited to assist young minds in forming a right judgment of human nature, of true religion, of its counterfeits, and of the abuses to which the name of religion is capable of being perverted. And he will likewise be able to select for their use, such authors and subjects as deserve their notice, from the surrounding rubbish in which they are almost buried.

My tutor should likewise be competently acquainted with the lighter accomplishments, which are usually understood by the term *Belles Lettres*, and a proper judge of them with respect both to their intrinsic and their relative value. Their intrinsic value to creatures who are posting to eternity, is not great; and a wise man if he has not been tinctured with them in early life, will seldom think it worth his while to attend much to them afterwards. Yet in such an age as ours, it is some disadvantage to a man in public life, if he is quite a stranger to them. To a tutor they are in a manner necessary. It is farther desirable that he should have a lively imagination, under the direction of a sound judgment and a correct and cultivated taste. Otherwise, how can he assist and form the taste and judgment of his pupils, or direct or criticise their compositions?

Natural Philosophy is not only a noble science, but one which offers the most interesting and profitable relaxations from the weight of severer studies. If the tutor be not possessed of this, he will lose a thousand opportunities of pointing out to his pupils the signatures of wisdom, power, and goodness, which the wonder-working God has impressed upon every part of the visible creation. But at the same time, he should know where to stop, and what bound to set to their inquiries. It is not necessary that either he or they should be numbered amongst the first astronomers or virtuosi of the age. A life devoted to the service of God and souls, will not afford leisure for this diminutive kind of pre-eminence. A general knowledge will suffice even in the tutor. And when he lectures upon these subjects, he will caution them against spending too much time and thought upon those branches of philosophy which have but a very remote tendency to qualify them for preaching the gospel. They are sent into the world and into the academy, not to collect shells, and fossils, and butter-

flies, or to surprise each other with feats of electricity, but to win souls for Christ.

Perhaps I have said enough of my tutor's knowledge, and may now consider him with regard to his spirit, his methods of communicating what he knows to his pupils, and his manner of living with them as a father with his children.

He must be *didacticos*, apt to teach. A man may know much, yet not have a facility of imparting his ideas. It is a talent and a gift of God, and therefore will always be found in some good degree in the person who is called of God to the tutor's office.

He will consider himself as a teacher, not only in the lecture-room, but in all places, and at all times, whether sitting in the house, or walking by the way, if any of his pupils are with him. And he will love to have them always about him, so far as their studies and his own necessary avocations will admit.

Two things he will aim to secure from them, reverence and affection. Without maintaining a steady authority, he can do nothing; and unless they love him, every thing will go on heavily. But if the pupils are properly chosen, such a man as I have described will be both loved and feared. His spiritual and exemplary deportment, his wisdom and abilities, will command their respect. His condescension and gentleness, his tenderness for their personal concerns, his assiduity in promoting their comfort, and doing them every friendly office in his power, will engage their love. These happy effects will be farther promoted by their frequent mutual intercourse in prayer, by his expository lectures, and by his public ministry, if he be a preacher. Having his eye unto the Lord, and his heart in his work, a blessing from on high shall descend upon him and upon his house.

As human nature is the same in all places, it is probable that the christians in Utopia may be divided among themselves with respect to rituals and modes of worship, in some such manner as we see and feel amongst us. Now here, as in every thing else, I would have my tutor a sort of phœnix, a man of a generous enlarged spirit, a real friend of that liberty wherewith Jesus has made his people free from the shackles and impositions of men. One who uniformly judges and acts upon that grand principle of the New Testament, which is likewise a plain and obvious maxim of common sense; I mean, that the Lord of all, the Head of the church, is the alone Lord and Judge of conscience. I suppose my tutor has already taken his side, that he is either in the Establishment (if there be one in Utopia) or of course a Dissenter from it. And, really, as to my scheme, I am indifferent which side he has taken; we shall not have a minute's debate about it, provided he acts consistently with the principles which I have assigned him. But as I myself, living in England, am of the Established Church, that you may not suspect me of partiality, I will suppose, and am ready to take it for granted, that he will be found to be a Utopian Dissenter.

On this supposition, my imagination takes a flight, hastens into the midst of things, and anticipates as present what is yet future. Methinks I see the tutor indulging his scholars (as at proper seasons he often will) with an hour of free conversation; and from some question proposed to him concerning the comparative excellence or authority of different forms of church government, taking occasion to open his mind to them, something in the following manner:

"My dear children, you may have observed, that, when in the course of our lectures, I have been led to touch upon this subject, it has not been my custom to speak in a dogmatical style. I have sometimes intimated to you, that though every part of the Levitical worship was of positive divine institution, yet when the people rested and trusted in their external forms, the Lord speaks as abhorring his own appointments. I have told you, upon the apostle's authority, that the kingdom of God consists not in meats and drinks, in names and forms, but in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Amidst the many divisions and subdivisions which obtain in the visible Church, there are in reality but two sorts of people, the children of God, and the children of the world. The former sort, though partakers in one life and in one hope, yet living in successive ages, in various countries, under very different modes of government, education, and customs, it seems morally impossible that they should all agree, as by instinct, in one common mode of social worship. It is indeed said, that there is a plan prescribed in the New Testament to which all ought to conform as nearly as possible. All parties say this in favour of their own plans; and men eminent for wisdom and holiness are to be found among the advocates for each. But is it not strange, that if the Lord has appointed such a standard, the wisest and best of his people should differ so widely in their views of it, and deviate so far from each other when they attempt to reduce it to practice? Let others dispute, but as for you my children, and me, let us rather adore the wisdom and goodness of our Lord. He who knew the heart of man, the almost invincible power of local prejudices, and what innumerable circumstances in different periods and places would render it impracticable for his people to tread exactly in the same line, has provided accordingly. The rules and

lights he has afforded us respecting the outward administration of his Church, are recorded with such a latitude, that his true worshippers may conscientiously hope they are acceptable to him, though the plans which they believe to be consistent with his revealed will, are far from corresponding with each other. It is sufficient that the apostolical canons, Let all things be done decently and in order, to edification and in charity, are universally binding; and were these on all sides attended to, smaller differences would be very supportable.

"I have often pointed out to you the wonderful analogy which the Lord has established in many instances, between his works in the outward creation, and in his kingdom of grace. Perhaps the variety observable in the former may be one instance of this kind. When you see every vegetable arrayed in green exactly of the same shade, or all tulips variegated in the same manner, as if painted from one common pattern, then, and not before, expect to find true believers agreed in their views and practice respecting the modes of religion.

"Study therefore the scriptures, my children, with humble prayer, that the Lord may give you such views of these concerns, as may fit you for the stations and services to which his providence may lead you. See with your own eyes, and judge for yourselves. This is your right. One is your master, even Christ, and you need not, you ought not to call any man master upon earth. But be content with this. Do not arrogate to yourselves the power of judging for others. Be willing that they should see with their own eyes likewise. The Papists, upon the ground of the assumed infallibility of their church, are at least consistent with themselves in condemning all who differ from them. Protestants confess themselves fallible, yet speak the same peremptory language.

"As to myself, if I had thought it preferable upon the whole to be a minister in our Established Church, I might probably have been one; but I trust I am where the Lord would have me to be, and I am satisfied. My desire for you is to see you able ministers of the New Testament. As to the part of the vineyard in which you are to labour, wait simply upon the Lord, and he in good time will point it out to you. If scripture and conscience lead you to prefer the Dissenting line, I shall say, It is well—provided you embrace it with a liberal spirit, and have a better warrant for your choice than merely the example of your tutor. Should you determine otherwise, I shall still say, It is well—provided I see you disinterested, humble, and faithful. Your being educated under my roof is a circumstance not likely to facilitate your admission into the Establishment; but if the Lord in his providence should open to any of you a door on that side, and incline you to enter, I shall not dissuade you from it, as though I thought it sinful. I shall only wish you to attend to that advice which cannot mislead you:—"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding; in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy path."

Thus far my tutor.—Or, since I am in a supposing humour, if you will give me leave to make one supposition more, that it is possible there may be Methodists and Itinerants in Utopia, as we have in England; he would then perhaps continue his discourse a little longer as follows:

"Though the pastoral care of a single congregation is the service which the Lord has allotted me, and I have not seen it my duty to engage in any thing which might lead me long or far from the people to whom I am related, I am no enemy to itinerant preaching. My Lord and Saviour himself, his apostles and first servants were all Itinerants; and I believe that houses and ships, hills and plains, the side of a river, or the sea-shore, are all fit places for preaching the gospel, and sufficiently authorized as such by the highest precedents. I cannot therefore censure, much less condemn, a practice which the scripture warrants, and to which I doubt not the Lord has given abundant testimony in our own times, by making the word thus dispensed effectual to the conversion and consolation of many souls. I believe indeed, that some persons not duly acquainted with their own hearts, nor with what is requisite to constitute a preacher, have too hastily supposed themselves called to preach the gospel; when the event has proved that the Lord had neither called them to his service nor furnished them for it. And I think, if it should generally be allowed that young men are proper judges in their own cause, and have a right to commence preachers when or where or how they please, without the advice or approbation of ministers more experienced than themselves, many inconveniences may and must follow. I could wish every young man to be so impressed with the force of the apostle's question, "Who is sufficient for these things?" that he should rather need invitation and encouragement to preach, than be disposed to run hastily into the work, as the horse rusheth into the battle. But I must not expect every thing will be managed according to my wish. I have mourned over the miscarriages of some Itinerant preachers, but I have been much comforted by the good conduct and success of others. It is neither my business nor my intention to persuade you to this course; but if, when you are properly instructed and qualified for the ministry, I should see any of you disposed to go forth in the Itinerant way, should I be satisfied of your principles and motives, and have reason

to hope your zeal was tempered with humility, I know not that I durst refuse my consent. For, as I have often told you, the honour of my Lord and Saviour, and the welfare of precious souls, are far dearer to me than the detached interests of any party; and if Christ be faithfully and successfully preached, in whatever way, and by whatever instruments he is pleased to work, "I do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."

I think what I have said of the tutor, and what he has just now said for himself, may suffice to give you an idea of the person I would choose, and that it is now time to consider,

III. The choice of Pupils.—I would have them all resident with the tutor, and therefore their number at one time can be but small; especially as I should wish him to undertake every branch of their education. He might have an assistant to teach the rudiments of the languages, a service that would otherwise take up much of the time which he could better employ, but he must do all the rest himself. I suppose therefore that ten, or at the most twelve pupils will be a sufficient number to be under his care at once. The man I have described would not be mercenary, but the labourer is worthy of his reward. As I shall find him work enough to take up his whole time, his pay ought to be competent and liberal; and, as I have supposed myself rich enough to execute my plan in what manner I please, I hope I shall not starve my tutor, nor put his economical talents on the stretch to contrive how to squeeze and save a pittance out of the sum allotted for their board. I would fix the boarding upon equitable and moderate terms distinct from his salary, which should be handsome, and always the same, whether he had one pupil with him, or ten, or twelve. It would be my part to keep the number up; but if I neglect it, he should be no loser; nor ought he to be dependent upon my caprice or negligence, but he should stand upon an easy and settled footing, so as to be free, not only from want, but from anxious care, that he might be able to attend to his business without distraction.

And now my house is ready, where shall I find young men to fill it? I must look around me, and request my friends to look out for me. When I have found two I will send them, and the rest as they offer. Perhaps it would be one of the chief difficulties attending my scheme, to collect ten or twelve youths worthy of such a tutor.

They must be serious. I mean they must have an awakened, experimental sense of the truth and goodness of the gospel. This is a point not easily ascertained, especially in young persons. There is often a something that resembles it, which, upon trial, does not prove satisfactory. However, my part will be to look to the Lord for guidance, and then judge as well as I can. But I hope no persuasion or recommendation, no desire of pleasing or obliging a friend, would prevail on me to admit one who I did not verily believe was a subject of the grace of God. Who would undertake to teach a parrot algebra? Yet this would be as practicable as to make those able and faithful preachers, whom the Lord has not first made Christians.

They must likewise have capacity. It is not necessary that their abilities should be of the first rate (perhaps but few of such are called;) but some tolerable measure of natural abilities, capable of being opened and improved by education, seems almost necessary in the person who aims to be a minister of the gospel. At least it will be necessary upon my plan; for as my tutor cannot take many, I must give the preference to such as may both do him credit by their proficiency under his care, and be qualified to profit others when they leave him.

Ex quovis ligno Mercurius non fit.

If the heart be changed and sanctified by grace, a person of the weakest natural understanding will acquire, under divine teaching, all that is necessary to enable him to fill up his station in private life with propriety, to overcome the world, and to make his own calling and election sure. But a preacher must have gifts as well as grace, to be able to divide the word of truth as a workman that needeth not to be ashamed. And therefore, though the Lord was once pleased by a dumb ass to rebuke the foolishness of a prophet, I am not forward to acknowledge those as ambassadors sent by him (however well-meaning they may be) who seem either to have no message to deliver, or no ability to deliver it.

I would likewise be satisfied, as much as possible, concerning the views and motives which make them desirous of devoting themselves to the ministry. Some desires of this kind are very frequently found in young converts. When a sense of eternal things is new and lively upon their minds, and they look round upon a world lying in wickedness, they are much affected. The obligations they feel to the Redeemer, a grief that he should be so little known, so little loved, and a compassion for their fellow sinners, whom they see liable to perish for lack of knowledge, make them often long to be employed, and sometimes constrain them to run before they are sent. But if they are not really designed by the Lord for this service, either their desires towards it gradually subside, and they yield themselves to his appointment in other paths of life; or, if they unadvisedly venture upon it, they are seldom either comfortable or useful. They soon feel themselves unequal to the work; or, if self-conceit prevents

them from feeling it, their hearers at least are very sensible of it. They often mistake error for truth. They retail scraps and shreds of sentiments which they pick up from others, and, for want of judgment, misapply them. Thus hypocrites are encouraged, and those whom the Lord would have comforted are made sad. They think that preaching with power consists in vociferation and distorted attitudes; and that to utter every thing that comes upon their minds, without end or side (as we say,) without any regard to text, context, occasion, or connection, is to preach extempore. Too often Satan gains open advantage over them: they are puffed up with pride, taken in snares, and perhaps fall into such woeful miscarriages as at length ruin their characters, and stop their mouths. It is therefore of great importance to be workers together with the Lord in this business; to choose those whom he chooses, to bring forward those whom he is preparing, and, if possible, none but these. We cannot indeed know the heart; but we may be wary and circumspect in judging by such lights as we can procure, and we ought to be so. Perhaps, after all, we may be mistaken in some instances; but, if we have done our best, we have done well, and shall not be blamable for such consequences as we could not possibly foresee or prevent. If a candidate for the academy appears to be of a self-diffident and humble spirit, to have some acquaintance with his own heart, a tolerable capacity, a turn for application, and an unblamable character as to his personal conduct, I shall be disposed to admit him. But I would leave the final decision of his fitness to the tutor. For which purpose, it may be proper that he should be under the tutor's eye, for a limited time, as a probationer.

IV. The next point I am to consider is, the Course of Study they should pursue.—Though I am rather inclined to give this up absolutely and without reserve to the tutor, who, if he answers my description, must be the most proper person to institute a plan for himself, and would have no need of my assistance. But if his humility and good opinion of me should lead him to desire my advice, he shall have it. I do not mean as to little circumstantials, but I would submit to him in a general and miscellaneous way such hints as may occur to me upon the subject. And I submit them to you beforehand.

A few things may be previously noticed, which, though they do not properly belong to their academical studies, are well worthy of attention.

A minister is a soldier of Jesus Christ, and, as such, is to expect and endure hardship. It is well to have this in our eye in the education of young men. They are not called to be gentlemen, but soldiers; not to live delicately, but to prepare for hardship. They should therefore be advised and accustomed to prefer a plain and frugal manner of life, and to avoid multiplying those wants which luxury and folly would prompt us to multiply almost *ad infinitum*. A propensity to indulgence either in the quantity or quality of food, is a meanness unworthy of a man, still more unsuitable to the character of a christian, and scandalous in a minister. I am no advocate for a monkish austerity, or a scrupulous, superstitious self-denial, which will almost starve the body to feed the pride of the heart. It is, however, very desirable to possess in early life, a habit of temperance, a mastery over appetite, and a resolute guard against every thing that has a tendency to blunt the activity of the spirits. And youth is the proper season for gaining this mastery, which if the golden opportunity be then lost, is seldom thoroughly acquired afterwards.

A propriety in dress should also be consulted. Neatness is commendable; but a student of divinity should keep at a distance from the air and appearance of a fop. A finical disposition in this article not only occasions a waste of time and expense, but is a token of a trifling turn of mind, and exposes the fine self-admiring youth, to the contempt or pity of the wise and good.

Farther, a habit of rising early should be resolutely formed. It redeems much time, and chiefly of those hours which are most favourable to study or devotion. It likewise cuts off the temptation to sitting up late, a hurtful and preposterous custom, which many students unwarily give unto, and which they cannot so easily break, when the bad effects of it upon their health convince them too late of their imprudence.

Let them be guarded against the snares attending a large acquaintance, and unnecessary visiting. The tutor will doubtless maintain authority and good discipline in his house, and not suffer any of his pupils to be absent from family worship, nor abroad after a fixed hour, without his express permission, which should not be given but for solid and just reasons. And he cannot be too careful, both by advice and vigilance, to prevent them from forming any female connections while under his roof, however honourable the views or deserving the person may be. Love and courtship are by no means favourable to study, nor indeed to devotion, at a time when their present engagements, and the uncertainty of their prospects in future life, render a settlement by marriage improper, if not impracticable.

Much study is a weariness to the flesh, and the body and the mind are so nearly connected, that what affects the one will have an influence upon the other. Relaxation and exercise are therefore necessary at proper seasons, for those who wish to preserve

cheerfulness and strength for service, and not to become old and disabled, through lowness of spirits, infirmities, and pains, before old age actually overtakes them. Riding is a manly, unexceptionable exercise, where it can be conveniently practised. But walking is, I suppose, equally healthful, and requires neither expense nor preparation. That the students may have an object in view when they go from home, the tutor will probably point out to them some of the Lord's poor, who live at convenient distances, whom they may visit, and comfort with their sympathy, advice, and prayers, as well as administer to the relief of their necessities, according to their ability. Thus while they are consulting their own health, they may at the same time imitate Him, who went about doing good. And in such visits they may meet with many hints from poor believers, concerning the Lord's wisdom and faithfulness in his dealings with them, and of the power of true religion, to confirm what they read upon these subjects, and probably some hints which their books will not supply them with.—Farther, if, when they are abroad together, they will attempt such conversation as warmed the hearts of the disciples when walking to Emmaus, and if, when alone, they adopt the pattern of Isaac, who went out into the fields to meditate, then all the time they can thus employ may be set down to the account of their studies; for few of their hours can be more profitably improved.

But what, and how, are they to study? The answer to this question depends upon another: What is the object of their studies? It is to make them not merely scholars, but ministers, thoroughly furnished for their office. The particulars I aim at in placing them with my tutor are such as follow:

1. An orderly, connected, and comprehensive knowledge of the common places and topics of divinity, considered as a whole: a system of truth, of which the holy scriptures is the sole fountain, treasury, and standard.

2. A competent acquaintance with sacred literature, by which I mean such writings, ancient and modern, as are helpful to explain or elucidate difficulties in scripture, arising from the phraseology, from allusion to customs and events not generally known, and from similar causes, and which therefore cannot be well understood without such assistance.

3. Such a general knowledge of philosophy, history, and other branches of polite literature, as may increase the stock of their ideas, afford them just conceptions of the state of things around them, furnish them with a fund for variety, enlargement, and illustration, that they may be able to enliven and diversify their discourses, which, without such a fund, will be soon apt to run in a beaten track, and to contain little more than a repetition of the same leading thoughts, without originality or spirit.

4. An ability to methodize, combine, distinguish, and distribute the ideas thus collected by study, so as readily to know what is properly adapted to the several subjects to be treated of, and to the several parts of the same subject. When the pupils are thus far accomplished, then I shall hope,

5. That they will in good time be able to preach extempore. I do not mean without forethought or plan, but without a book, and without the excessive labour of committing their discourses to memory. This ability of speaking to an auditory in a pertinent and collected manner, with freedom and decorum, with fidelity and tenderness, looking at them instead of looking at a paper, gives a preacher a considerable advantage, and has a peculiar tendency to command and engage the attention. It likewise saves much time, which might be usefully employed in visiting his people. It is undoubtedly a gift of God, but like many other gifts, to be sought, not only by prayer, but in the use of means. The first essays will ordinarily be weak and imperfect; but the facility increases, till at length a habit is formed, by diligence and perseverance. I should not think my academy complete, unless my tutor was attentive to form his pupils to the character of public speakers.

General rules admit of exceptions. I have myself known persons, who, with plain sense, true humility, and a spirit devoted to the Lord, and dependent upon him, have, with little or no assistance from men, proved solid, exemplary, and useful ministers. Such instances convince me, that however expedient learning may be, it is not indispensibly necessary for a minister, especially for one who is to labour in a retired situation, and amongst plain unlettered hearers. I would not therefore preclude my tutor from all opportunity of being useful to persons of this description, who would be glad of such helps from him as they might receive in their mother tongue, when the time of life, or particular circumstances might render the study of languages and science inconvenient. And, in general, as the capacities, dispositions, and prospects of a number of pupils would of course be different, I should leave it to his discretion to conduct them to the same grand ends of service, by such difference of method as he should judge most suitable to each; so as not to discourage or over-burden the truly deserving, nor to permit (if it can be prevented) the more studious and successful, to set too high a value upon their superior accomplishments. For after all it must be owned, and ought to be remembered, that grace and divine wisdom are of unspeakably greater importance, than scholastic attainments without them. We

are sure, that though a man had the knowledge of all mysteries, the gifts of tongues and miracles, and the powers of an angel, if he has not likewise humility, spirituality, and love, he is in the sight of God but as sounding brass or a noisy cymbal. He may answer the purpose of a church bell to call a congregation together, but has little prospect of doing them good when they are assembled.

But to return to my professed students, and,

First, As to the study of Theology.—How far it may be expedient to adopt some system or body of Divinity as a text or ground whereon to proceed, I am not quite determined; and which of these learned summaries is the best, I shall not attempt to decide till I have read them all. My tutor will have more of this knowledge; I shall therefore refer the choice, if it be necessary to choose one, to him. Calvin, Turretine, Witsius, and Ridgely, are those with which I have formerly been most acquainted. But indeed, of these, at present, I can remember little more than that I have read them, or the greatest part of them. I recollect just enough to say, that though I approve and admire them all, I have at the same time my particular objections to them all, as to this use of them. The Bible is my body of Divinity; and were I a tutor myself, I believe I should prefer the epistles of St. Paul as a summary, to any human systems I have seen, especially his epistles to the Romans, Galatians, the Hebrews, and Timothy. There are few uninspired writings, however excellent in the main, but bear some marks of the infirmities, attachments, and prepossessions, which in a greater or less degree are inseparable from the present state of human nature. I would have my pupils draw their knowledge as immediate from the fountain head as possible. I care not how extensive and various their reading of good authors may be under the tutor's eye: the more so the better. He will improve the differences they will find among learned and spiritual men, into an argument to engage them to study the scripture more closely, and to bring every debated sentiment to be tried and finally determined by that unerring standard. He will teach them to collect the detached portions of truth wherever they meet with them; to borrow from all, but to give themselves up implicitly to the dictates of none. For I know no author who is worthy the honour of being followed absolutely and without reserve.

I am told, (for I know nothing of academies but from hearsay,) that it is customary for pupils to write after the tutor, who reads his lecture. If I should adopt this custom, I would not confine myself to it. Such written lectures, if well executed, must be good patterns to form the students to closeness in method and style. But I should likewise wish the tutor to give them unpremeditated lectures. Great masters of music (it is said) frequently feel an impetus in extempore playing, which enables them to execute off hand such strains as they wish to repeat, but cannot; their taste assuring them, that they are superior in kind to what they can ordinarily attain when they study and compose by rule. Thus a tutor who thoroughly understands his subject, and speaks from the fulness of his heart, will, now and then at least, feel a happy moment, when he will seem to possess new powers. His thoughts and expressions at such a time will have a peculiar precision and force, and will possibly illuminate and affect his hearers more than his regular and written lectures. When he has done speaking, let the pupils retire and commit to writing what they can recollect of such discourses, keeping to his method, but using their own expressions. These exercises would engage their attention, employ their invention and ingenuity, accustom them to consider the same subjects in different lights, and contribute to make the knowledge they derive from him, more their own, than by being always confined to transcribe, line by line, what was read to them.

I would not have the pupils put upon the needless and hurtful attempt of proving first principles. May not a man read lectures upon optics without previously proving the existence of the sun? My tutor will not coldly lay before his students the arguments *pro* and *con*, and then leave them to decide as evidence to them appears, whether there be a God, or whether the scriptures be of divine inspiration or not. So likewise with respect to the different sentiments on the primary points of scripture, as whether the Saviour be man or angel, or God manifest in the flesh; or, concerning the different acceptations of the words Depravity, Guilt, Faith, Grace, Atonement, and the like—he will speak with a becoming confidence and certainty on which side the truth lies. He will indeed furnish them with solid confutations of error from scripture and experience; but he will take care to let them know that these things are already settled; and proposed to them, not as candidates for their good opinion, but as truths which demand and deserve their attention. My tutor will not dogmatize, and expect them to adopt his opinions without any better reason than because they are his. He will endeavour to throw every light he is master of upon the subject, but at the same time he will speak as a teacher, not as an inquirer; as one who speaks that which he has known, and testifies that which he has seen.—He will not attempt to fill their head with a detail of all the cavils which pride and sophistry have started against the truths of God; nor so flatter his pupils, as to suppose them competent judges

when they have weighed and compared the several argumentations. But he will rather warn them of their natural bias to the erroneous side, and guard them against the arts of those, who with fair words and fine speeches beguile the unprincipled and unwary. A tutor is a guide, and if worthy of his office, must be able to say, without hesitation: "This is the way, walk ye in it." Should he be seduced, by the specious sounds of candour and freedom of inquiry, to take the opposite method, and think it his duty to puzzle his scholars with all the waking dreams, objections, and evasions by which men reputed wise have opposed the simplicity of the faith once delivered to the saints, I should fear they would be more likely to turn out sceptics than ministers of the gospel.

Nor should he, with my consent, lay down a scheme of what is commonly called Natural Religion, as a substratum whereon to build a Religion of Divine Revelation. It is needful that he should give his pupils a just idea of the religion of fallen nature; but he will remind them that the few valuable sentiments occasionally found in the writings of the heathen philosophers and moralists were not their own. They are all represented as having travelled for their knowledge, and all in the same route, into Phœnicia or Egypt, into the neighbourhood of the only people who at that time were favoured with the oracles of God: and may, therefore, be justly supposed to have derived the detached particles of truth they acquired, from that people, either by immediate converse with them, or from their inspired books; especially from the time they were translated into the Greek language. He will point out to them the strong probability that Epictetus and the later philosophers were equally or more indebted to the Christians and the New Testament. With respect to the sceptical moralists and reasoners of modern times, the proof will be still clearer and stronger, that their best notions are borrowed from the religion they attempt to depreciate. My tutor, in order to satisfy them how far the powers of unassisted fallen nature can proceed in the investigation of religious and moral truths, will set before them the progress which has actually been made in this way by the negroes in Africa or the American Indians. With such a picture of natural religion in their view, I should hope they would be led most cordially to praise God for the inestimable gift of his Holy Word, without the help of which the boasted light of nature is darkness that may be felt.

In my academy I would have no formal disputations upon points of divinity. If it be necessary to sharpen or exercise their wits by disputing, to which under proper regulations I should not object, there are topics in abundance at hand. Let them dispute, if they please, for or against the motion of the earth. Let them determine whether Cæsar or Pompey was the better man; or, in what respects Cato, who chose to die rather than venture to look Cæsar in the face, discovered more fortitude or true greatness of mind, than the slave who elopes from his master for fear of the lash. Let them contend whether learning has upon the whole been productive of most good, or of most mischief, to mankind. My tutor can supply them with a thousand questions of this kind. But to set a young man to put his ingenuity to the stretch, either to maintain a gross error, or to oppose a known and important truth, is, in my view not only dangerous, but little less than a species of profaneness. What must the holy angels, who with humble admiration contemplate the wisdom and glory of God displayed in the gospel, what must they think of the arrogance of sinful worms, who presume so far to trifle with the doctrines and mysteries he has revealed, as to degrade them into subjects for school exercise and logical prize-fighting? Can it be possible to maintain a spirit of reverence and dependence amidst the noise of such malapert discussions? And if the youth to whom the wrong side of the question is committed, should by superior address nonplus and silence his antagonist; my heart would be in pain for him, lest he should from that moment be prejudiced against the truth which he had insulted with success; and think it really indefensible, because the other was not able to defend it.

Having been so long on the first article, I must endeavour to be more brief on those which follow.

Secondly, By sacred literature I chiefly mean Philology, Criticism, and Antiquities, so far as they are employed in the illustration of scripture. In these studies, if there be a proper application in the pupils, little more will be needful on the tutor's part, than to put suitable books into their hands, to superintend their progress, and to obviate difficulties they may meet with. I would wish them not only to read the scriptures in the Hebrew and Greek originals, but to be tolerable masters of the construction in both languages. This attainment is certainly not necessary to a minister; but they who apply themselves to the study of divinity in early life, will have time enough to acquire it, and the acquisition will be well worth their labour. If not necessary, it will be found very expedient and useful, and when the difficulties of the first entrance and rudiments are surmounted, will be very pleasant. The tutor will then enliven their study and facilitate their advance, by reading a chapter with them in each Testament daily or frequently, intermingling critical or expository strictures as he goes along. And he will probably furnish those students

who have taste, with Dr. Lowth's *Prælectiones de Poësi Hebræa*, which will enable them to judge of the style and idiom of the Hebrew Bible, and particularly of the style and beauties of the Hebrew poetry. Blackwall's Sacred Classics may be added for the Greek.

Since the learned have of late years condescended to lay open the way to the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, by publishing Lexicons, Grammars, and other helps in the English tongue, the knowledge of the Latin is less needful to a Bible student than it was formerly. But as there are many valuable books in Latin, and not yet translated, I must wish our pupils so far acquainted with the Latin language as to be able to read good authors in it. But as they are not to preach in Latin, an accurate skill is hardly worth attempting, unless they have had a classical school education before they come to the academy. The mind is incapable of too many acquisitions: life is short, and more important business awaits them, in subserviency to which every thing else must be conducted.

Books of criticism and on scripture-antiquities are at hand in plenty. It will be impossible to read them all. The selection belongs not to me, but to the tutor. The *Synopsis Criticorum*, Godwin and Jennings, will perhaps be of the number he will choose. A good Ecclesiastical History seems to be still a desideratum. A mass of materials, so far as it goes, is already prepared in the Magdeburg Centuriators, which affords a striking monument of the compiler's patience: but it would likewise require some patience in the reader who should undertake to go through it. Mosheim is perhaps the best book we have upon the subject, if the reader knows so much of himself and of the work of grace, as to prevent him from being misled by him, when treating on subjects which he does not appear to have rightly understood. But as to facts, I believe he is in general worthy of credit. Bingham's Antiquities may deserve inspection, if it be only to show how soon and how generally the beautiful simplicity of the gospel was corrupted by those who professed it. Dupin and Dr. Cave's *Historia Literaria Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum* are still more valuable; but the characters of the writers, and their strong prepossessions in favour of antiquity, should be known and allowed for.

Thirdly, Much time cannot be allowed in our academy for the pursuit of polite literature. But an entrance may be made, and a relish for it acquired, under the direction and restraint of the tutor, which may provide the students with a profitable amusement for leisure hours in future life; for in this knowledge they may advance from year to year. A perusal of such books as Rollin on the Belles Lettres, Bossuet's Universal History, Derham and Ray on the Creation, and a few of our best poets, may suffice while they are students. Other books will occasionally come in their way; for the tutor should have a well-chosen library for the accommodation of his pupils; but he will guard them against spending too much time in this line of reading. For though it has its subordinate advantages, it may, if too much indulged, divert them from the main point. And they should be taught to refer every thing they read to the principles of scripture, to the knowledge of the heart of man, and the works, the ways, the wisdom, and providence of God, otherwise reading will only tend to make them wise in their own conceit. I make short work with this article, and hasten to consider,

Fourthly, What may be helpful (by the divine blessing) to enable the pupils to communicate the fruits of their knowledge to advantage in the public ministry, that they may appear workmen that need not be ashamed. For this, as I have formerly intimated, their chief and immediate dependence must be on the Lord. He alone can give them a mouth and wisdom for his service; and without the unction from on high, the study of divinity and every thing relative to it, will be but like learning the art of navigation on shore, which is very different from the knowledge necessary to the mariner, who is actually called to traverse the ocean. But dependence upon the Lord should be no discouragement to the use of means.

I would have my students good logicians. The logic of the schools is in a great measure a cramp, forced, and formal affair, and may possibly have made almost as many pedants and sophists as good reasoners. But Dr. Watts has furnished us with a system of logic in a more intelligible and amiable form, and divested it of the solemn impertinences with which it was encumbered. As the rules of grammar are themselves drawn from the language they are designed to regulate, so good logic is no more than the result of observations upon the powers of the human mind: and thus we see, that many people of plain sense are passable logicians, though they never saw a book upon the subject, and perhaps do not understand the meaning of the term. But they may be much assisted in the habits of thinking, judging, and reasoning, and in disposing their thoughts in an advantageous method, by rules judiciously formed and arranged. In this view I judge Dr. Watts's logic, with his subsequent treatise on the Improvement of the Mind, to be very valuable. And, together with the more scientific part of the subject, he will provide my pupils with a great variety of hints for their conduct, and for distinguishing the principles and conduct of others. These books should be frequently read, and closely studied, and will afford the tutor an exten-

sive scope for their instruction. Unless a man can conceive and define his subject clearly, distinguish and enumerate the several parts, and knows how to cast them into a convenient order and dependence, he cannot be a masterly preacher. And though a good understanding may supersede the necessity of logical rules, it will likewise derive advantage from them.

I have not so much to say in favor of another branch of artificial assistance, though much stress has been sometimes laid upon it. We must not, however, quite omit it: for an academic will be expected to know, that the learned have thought proper to give Greek names to certain forms and figures of speech, in the use of which the common people, without being aware of their skill in rhetoric, are little less expert than the learned themselves. When he can repeat these hard names, with their etymologies and significations, rhetoric can do but little more for him. The rules it professes to teach are in general needless to those who have genius, and useless to those who have none. If a youth has not a turn for eloquence, stuffing his head with the names of tropes and figures will not give it him. To know the names of tools in an artificer's shop is one thing, but to have skill to use them as a workman is something very different. Here the tutor will use his discretion; for if any of his pupils are not likely to be orators, he will take care that, if he can prevent it, they shall not be pedants, or value themselves on retailing a list of technical terms, of which they know neither the use nor the application. At the best, too much attention to artificial rules will make but an artificial orator, and rather qualify the student to set off himself than his subject. The grand characteristic of the gospel orator is simplicity. Many years have passed since I read Fenelon's treatise on Pulpit Eloquence; but I hope my tutor will put it into the hands of his pupils. It remains to inquire,

Fifthly, How the pupils are to be assisted and directed, that they may be able to preach *extempore:* An ability which I suppose to be ordinarily attainable by all who are called of God to preach the gospel, if they will diligently apply themselves to attain it, in the use of proper means. I do not expect they will succeed in this way to my wish, without prayer, study, effort, and practice. For as I have already hinted, I mean something more by it than speaking at random.

A well-known observation of Lord Bacon is much to my present purpose. It is to this effect: That reading makes a full man, writing an exact man, and speaking a ready man. The approved extempore preacher must have a fund of knowledge collected from various reading: and it would not be improper to read some books, with the immediate design of comparing his style and manner with approved models. It might be wished, that the best divines were always the best writers; but the style of many of them is quaint, involved, and obscure. Some books that are well written have little else to recommend them, yet may be useful for this purpose; and the periodical writings of Addison and Johnson abound with judicious observations on men and manners, besides being specimens of easy and elegant composition. Among writers in divinity I would recommend Dr. Watts and Dr. Witherspoon as good models. By perusing such authors with attention, I hope the pupils will acquire a taste for good writing, and be judges of a good style. Perspicuity, closeness, energy and ease, are the chief properties of such a style. On the contrary, a style that is either obscure, redundant, heavy, or affected, cannot be a good one. But I cannot advise them to copy the late Mr. Hervey. His dress, though it fits him, and he does not look amiss in it, is rather too gaudy and ornamented for a divine. He had a fine imagination, an elegant taste, and shows much precision and judgment in his choice of words: but though his luxuriant manner of writing has many of the excellencies both of good poetry and good prose, it is in reality neither the one nor the other. An injudicious imitation of him has spoiled some persons for writers, who, if they could have been content with the plain and natural mode of expression, might have succeeded tolerably well.

The pupil likewise must write as well as read, and he should write frequently. Let him fill one common-place book after another, with extracts from good authors; this method, while it tends to fix the passages or their import in his mind, will also lead him to make such observations respecting the order, and construction, and force of words, as will not so readily occur to his notice by reading only. Then let him try his own hand, and accustom himself to write his thoughts, sometimes in notes and observations on the books he reads, sometimes in the form of essays or sermons. He will do well likewise to cultivate a correspondence with a few select friends; for epistolary writing seems nearest to that easiness of manner which a public speaker should aim at.

I would not have his first attempt to speak publicly be in the preaching way, or even upon spiritual subjects. It might probably abate the reverence due to divine truth, to employ it in efforts of ingenuity. Suppose the tutor should read to them a passage of history, and require them to repeat the relation to him the next day, in their own manner. He would then remark to them if they had omitted any essential part, or used improper expressions. Or they might be put upon making speeches or declamations on

such occasions or incidents as he should propose. By degrees such of them as are judged to be truly spiritual and humble, might begin to speak upon a text of scripture, in the presence of the tutor and pupils; and I should hope this might, in due time, become a part of the morning or evening devotions in the family. But let them be especially cautioned not to trifle with holy things, nor profane the great subjects of scripture, by making them mere exhibitions and trials of skill.

Thus by combining much reading and writing with their attempts to speak, and all under the direction of a judicious tutor, I shall have a cheerful hope that the pupils will gradually attain a readiness and propriety of speech; and when actually sent out to preach, will approve themselves scribes well instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom, qualified to bring forth from the treasury of their knowledge and experience, things new and old for the edification of their hearers.

And now I may draw towards a close. There are some branches of science, or what is so called, on which I lay but little stress. I have no great opinion of metaphysical studies. For pneumatology and ethics I would confine my pupils to the Bible. The researches of wise men in this way, which have not been governed by the word of God, have produced little but uncertainty, futility, or falsehood. My tutor will, I hope, think it sufficient to show the pupils how successfully these wise and learned reasoners reciprocally refute each other's hypotheses. And if he informs them more in detail of the extravagances which have been started concerning the nature and foundation of moral virtue; or of the dreams of philosophers, some of whom would exclude matter; and others would exclude mind out of the universe; he will inform them likewise, that he does not thereby mean properly to add to their stock of knowledge, (for we should in reality have been full as wise if these subtilties had never been heard of,) but only to guard them against being led into the mazes of error and folly, by depending too much on the reveries of philosophers.

After this delineation of my plan, it will be needless to inform you, that I do not propose my academy to be a spiritual hot-bed, in which the pupils shall be raised, and ripened into teachers, almost immediately upon their admission. I have allowed for a few excepted cases; but in general it is my design, that their education shall be comprehensive and exact. I would have them learn before they undertake to teach; and their sufficiency to be evidenced by a better testimonial than their own good opinion of themselves. A scribe well instructed, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, an able minister of the New Testament, are scriptural expressions, intimating what ought to be the qualifications of those who undertake the office of a preacher or pastor. The apostle expressly forbids a novice to be employed in these services. And though in the present day this caution is very much disregarded by persons who undoubtedly mean well; yet I believe the neglect of scriptural rules (which are not arbitrary, but founded in a perfect knowledge of human nature) will always produce great inconveniences. I shall think a young man of tolerable abilities makes a very good improvement of his time, if the tutor finds him fit for actual service, after three or four years close attention to his studies.

But what have I done?—in compliance with your request, I have been led to give such an undisguised view of my sentiments on this interesting subject, that though I feel myself a cordial friend to all sides and parties who hold the Head, and agree in the grand principles of our common faith; I fear, lest some of every party will be displeased with me. I rely on your friendship and your knowledge of me to bear witness for me, that I would not willingly offend or grieve a single person. And you can likewise testify, that I did not set myself to work—that I was much surprised when you proposed it to me; and that you have reason to believe my regard for you, and for the design you informed me of, were the only motives of my venturing upon the task you assigned me.

I have by no means exhausted the subject, though I hope I have not omitted any thing that very materially relates to it. If I was really in Utopia, and to carry my plan into execution, other regulations would probably occur, which have at present escaped me.

—— res, ætas, usus,
Semper aliquid apportent novi.

What I have written I submit to the candour of you and your friends: adding my prayers, that the great Head of the church, the fountain of grace, and author of salvation, may direct your deliberations, and bless you with wisdom, unanimity, and success, in whatever you may attempt for the honour of his name, and the good of souls.

I am, dear sir,

Your sincere friend and servant,

OMICRON.

May 14, 1782.

A MONUMENT

TO

THE PRAISE OF THE LORD'S GOODNESS,

AND TO THE MEMORY OF

MISS ELIZA CUNNINGHAM,

THE LAST SURVIVING CHILD OF MR. JAMES CUNNINGHAM, OF PITTARTHIE, FIFESHIRE.

Jesus amor meus est; si rideat, omnia rident.
O Death, where is thy sting? 1 Cor. xv. 55.

PREFACE.

When the following narrative was drawn up, the writer was aware that his feelings rendered him incompetent to judge, how much of a relation, every part of which was interesting to himself, might be fit to offer to the Public. Many little circumstances which the indulgence of a friend could bear with, might to strangers appear trivial and impertinent. He therefore wrote only for his friends; and printed no more copies than he thought would be sufficient to distribute within the circle of his personal acquaintance. But as the paper has been much inquired after, and many of his friends have expressed their wish, that it might be more extensively circulated, he has at length yielded to their judgment.

It is to be lamented, that in this enlightened age, so signalized by the prevalence of a spirit of investigation, Religion should, by many, be thought the only subject unworthy of a serious inquiry; and that, while in every branch of science they studiously endeavour to trace every fact to its proper and adequate cause, and are cautious of admitting any theory which cannot stand the test of experiment, they treat the use of the term experimental, when applied to Religion, with contempt. Yet there are many things connected with this subject, in which, whether we are willing or unwilling, we are, and must be nearly interested. Death, for instance, is inevitable. And if there be an hereafter, (and it is impossible to prove that there is not,) the consequences of death must be important. Many persons die, as they live, thoughtless and careless what consequences may await them. Others, whose characters and conduct do not appear to have been worse than those of the former, cannot die so. They have dark and painful forebodings, and leave this world with reluctance and terror. And there are others, who, though conscious that they are sinners, and sure that they are about to enter upon an unchangeable and endless state of existence, possess peace, composure, and joy. These declare that they owe this happy state of mind to their dependence upon Jesus the Saviour, on whose blood and mediation they have built their hopes. And who can possibly disprove their words! Such an instance is now in the Reader's hands. The fact is indubitable. A child under the age of fifteen did thus rejoice in the midst of pains and agonies, to the admiration of all who be-

held her. She was willing to leave all her friends whom she dearly loved, and by whom she was tenderly beloved; for she knew in whom she believed, and that when she should be absent from the body, she would be present with the Lord. With this assurance, she triumphed in the prospect of glory, and smiled upon the approach of death.

It may be presumed, that whoever seriously considers this case, will not be able to satisfy himself, by ascribing such remarkable effects, in so young a subject, to the power of habit, example, or system. If he does not account for them upon the principles of the gospel, he will be unable to assign any proportionable cause. And it is to be feared, that if he is not affected by a testimony so simple and so striking, neither would he be persuaded though one should rise from the dead.

Hoxton, Nov. 17, 1785.

A MONUMENT, &c.

As I write not for the eye of the public, but chiefly to put a testimony of the Lord's goodness into the hands of my dear friends who have kindly afforded us their sympathy and prayers on the late occasion; I do not mean either to restrain the emotions of my heart, or to apologize for them. I shall write simply and freely, as I might speak to a person, to whose intimacy and tenderness I can fully entrust myself, and who I know will bear with all my weaknesses.

In May, 1782, my sister Cunningham was at Edinburgh, chiefly on the account of her eldest daughter, then in the fourteenth year of her age, who was very ill of a consumption. She had already buried an only son, at the age of twelve; and while all a mother's care and feelings were engaged by the rapid decline of a second amiable child, she was unexpectedly and suddenly bereaved of an affectionate and excellent husband. Her trials were great, but the Lord had prepared her for them. She was a believer. Her faith was strong, her graces active, and her conduct exemplary. She walked with God, and he supported her. And though she was a tender and sympathizing friend, she had a happy firmness of temper, so that her character as a christian, and the propriety of her behaviour in every branch of relative life, appeared with peculiar advantage in the season of affliction. She returned to Anstruther a widow, with her sick child, who languished till October, and then died.

Though my sister had many valuable and pleasing connections in Scotland, yet her strongest tie being broken, she readily accepted my invitation to come and live with us. She was not only dear to me as Mrs. Newton's sister, but we had lived long in the habits of intimate friendship. I knew her worth, and she was partial to me. She had yet one child remaining, her dear Eliza. We already had a dear orphan niece, whom we had, about seven years before, adopted for our own daughter. My active fond imagination anticipated the time of her arrival, and drew a pleasing picture of the addition the company of such a sister, such a friend, would make to the happiness of our family. The children likewise—there was no great disparity between them either in years or stature. From what I had heard of Eliza, I was prepared to love her before I saw her; though she came afterwards into my hands like a heap of untold gold, which, when counted over, proves to be a larger sum than was expected. My fancy paired and united these children; I hoped that the friendship between us and my sister would be perpetuated in them. I seemed to see them like twin sisters, of one heart and mind, habited nearly alike, always together, always with us.—Such was my plan—but the Lord's plan was very different, and therefore mine failed. It is happy for us, poor short-sighted creatures, unable as we are to foresee the consequences of our own wishes, that if we know and trust him, he often is pleased to put a merciful negative upon our purposes; and condescends to choose better for us than we can for ourselves. What might have been the issue of my plan, could it have taken place, I know not; but I can now praise and adore him for the gracious issue of his. I praise his name, that I can cheerfully comply with his word, which says, "Be still, and know that I am God." I not only can bow (as it becomes a creature and a sinner to do) to his sovereignty; but I admire his wisdom and goodness, and can say from my heart, "He has done all things well."

My sister had settled her affairs previous to her removal, and nothing remained but to take leave of her friends, of whom she had many, not only in Anstruther, but in different parts of the county. In February, 1783, I received a letter from her, which, before I opened it, I expected was to inform me that she was upon the road in her way to London.

But the information was, that in a little journey she had made to bid a friend farewell, she had caught a violent cold, which brought on a fever and a cough, with other symptoms, which, though she described them as gently as possible, that we might not be alarmed, obliged me to give up instantly the pleasing hope of seeing her. Succeeding letters confirmed my apprehensions; her malady increased, and she was soon confined to her bed. Eliza was at school at Musselburgh. Till then she had enjoyed a perfect state of health; but while her dear mother was rapidly declining, she likewise caught a great cold, and her life likewise was soon thought to be in danger. On this occasion, that fortitude and resolution which so strongly marked my sister's character, was remarkably displayed. She knew that her own race was almost finished; she earnestly desired that Eliza might live or die with us. And the physicians advised a speedy removal into the south. Accordingly, to save time, and to save Eliza from the impressions which the sight of a dying parent might probably make upon her spirits, and possibly apprehensive that the interview might make too great an impression upon her own; she sent this her only beloved child from Edinburgh directly to London, without letting her come home to take a last leave of her. She contented herself with committing and bequeathing her child to our care and love in a letter, which I believe was the last she was able to write.

Thus powerfully recommended by the pathetic charge of a dying mother, the dearest friend we had upon earth, and by that plea for compassion which her illness might have strongly urged even upon strangers, we received our dear Eliza as a trust, and as a treasure, on the 15th of March. My sister lived long enough to have the comfort of knowing, not only that she was safely arrived, but was perfectly pleased with her new situation. She was now freed from all earthly cares. She suffered much in the remaining part of her illness, but she knew whom she believed; she possessed a peace past understanding, and a hope full of glory. She entered into the joy of her Lord on the 10th of May, 1783, respected and regretted by all who knew her.

I soon perceived that the Lord had sent me a treasure indeed. Eliza's person was agreeable. There was an ease and elegance in her whole address, and a gracefulness in her movements, till long illness and great weakness bowed her down. Her disposition was lively, her genius quick and inventive, and if she had enjoyed health, she probably would have excelled in every thing she attempted that required ingenuity. Her understanding, particularly her judgment, and her sense of propriety, was far above her years. There was something in her appearance which usually procured her favour at first sight. She was honoured by the notice of several persons of distinction, which, though I thankfully attribute in part to their kindness to me, I believe was a good deal owing to something rather uncommon in her. But her principal endearing qualities, which could be only fully known to us who lived with her, were the sweetness of her temper, and a heart formed for the exercise of affection, gratitude, and friendship. Whether, when at school, she might have heard sorrowful tales from children, who having lost their parents, met with a great difference, in point of tenderness, when they came under the direction of uncles and aunts, and might think that all uncles and aunts were alike, I know not; but I have understood since from herself, that she did not come to us with any highly raised expectations of the treatment she was to meet with. But as she found (the Lord in mercy to her and to us having opened our hearts to receive her) that it was hardly possible for her own parents to have treated her more tenderly, and that it was from that time the business and the pleasure of our lives, to study how to oblige her, and how to alleviate the afflictions which we were unable to remove; so we likewise quickly found, that the seeds of our kindness could hardly be sown in a more promising and fruitful soil. I know not that either her aunt or I ever saw a cloud upon her countenance during the time she was with us. It is true we did not, we could not unnecessarily cross her; but if we thought it expedient to over-rule any proposal she made, she acquiesced with a sweet smile; and we were certain that we should never hear of that proposal again. Her delicacy however was quicker than our observation; and she would sometimes say, when we could not perceive the least reason for it, "I am afraid I answered you peevishly; indeed I did not intend it; if I did I ask your pardon; I should be very ungrateful, if I thought any pleasure equal to that of endeavouring to please you." It is no wonder that we dearly loved such a child!

Wonderful is the frame of the human heart.—The Lord claims and deserves it all; yet there is still room for all the charities of relative life, and scope for their full play; and they are capable of yielding the sincerest pleasures this world can afford, if held in subordination to what is supremely due to him. The marriage relation, when cemented by a divine blessing, is truly a union of hearts, and the love resulting from it will admit of no competition in the same kind. Children have the next claim; and whether there be one, or two, or many, each one seems to be the object of the whole of the parent's love. Perhaps my friends who have children, may think that I who never had

any, can only talk by guess upon this subject. I presume not to dispute the point with them. But when it pleased the Lord to put my dear Betsey under my care, I seemed to acquire a new set of feelings, if not exactly those of a parent, yet, as I conceive, not altogether unlike them. And I long thought it was not possible for me to love any child as I did her. But when Eliza came, she, without being her rival, quickly participated with her in the same affection. I found I had room enough for them both, without prejudice to either. I loved the one very dearly, and the other no less than before; if it were possible still more, when I saw that she entered into my views, received and behaved to her cousin with great affection, and ascribed many little indulgences and attentions, which were shown her, to their proper ground, the consideration of her ill state of health, and not to any preference that could operate to her disadvantage. For the Lord was pleased to answer my prayers in this respect so graciously, that I could not perceive that any jealousy or suspicion took place between them on either side, from first to last.

The hectic fever, cough, and sweats, which Eliza brought with her from Scotland, were subdued in the course of the summer, and there appeared no reason to apprehend that she would be taken off very suddenly. But still there was a worm preying upon the root of this pretty gourd. She had seldom any severe pain till within the last fortnight of her life, and usually slept well; but when awake she was always ill. I believe she knew not a single hour of perfect ease; and they who intimately knew her state, could not but wonder to see her so placid, cheerful, attentive when in company, as she generally was. Many a time when the tears have silently stolen down her cheeks, if she saw that her aunt or I observed her, she would wipe them away, come to us with a smile and a kiss, and say, "Do not be uneasy, I am not very ill, I can bear it, I shall be better presently," or to that effect.

Her case was thought beyond the reach of medicine, and for a time no medicine was used. She had air and exercise, as the weather and circumstances would permit. For the rest, she amused herself as well as she could, with her guitar or harpsichord, with her needle, and with reading. She had a part likewise, when able, in such visits as we paid or received. And our visits were generally regulated by a regard to what she could bear. Her aunt especially, seldom went abroad, but at such times, and to such places, as we thought agreeable and convenient to her. For we could perceive that she loved home best, and best of all when we were at home with her.

In April, 1784, we put her under the care of my dear friend Dr. Benamor. To the blessing of the Lord on his skill and endeavours, I ascribe the pleasure of having her continued with us so long; nor can I sufficiently express my gratitude for his assiduous unwearied attention, nor for his great tenderness. She is now gone, and can no more repeat what she has often spoken, of the great comfort it was to her to have so affectionate and sympathizing a physician; but while I live, I hope it will always be my pleasure to acknowledge our great obligations to him on her account. I should be ungrateful, likewise, were I to omit mentioning the kindness of Dr. Allen, of Dulwich, who attended her daily during her last stay at Southampton. He was so obliging, likewise, as to visit her, and to meet Dr. Benamor upon her case, after her return to London. Their joint prescriptions were carefully followed. But what can the most efficacious medicines, or the best physicians, avail to prolong life, when the hour approaches, in which the prayer of the great Intercessor must be accomplished, "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, to behold my glory." This was the proper cause of my dear Eliza's death. The Lord sent this child to me to be brought up for him; he owned my poor endeavours; and when her education was completed, and she was ripened for heaven, he took her home to himself. He has richly paid me my wages, in the employment itself, and in the happy issue.

Dr. Benamor advising a trial of the salt water, we passed the month of August, 1784, with her, partly at Mr. Walter Taylor's, at Southampton, and partly at Charles Etty's, Esq. of Priestlands, near Lymington. While she was with these kind and generous friends, she had every accommodation and assistance that could be thought of or wished for. And the bathing was evidently useful, so far as to give some additional strength to her very weak and relaxed frame, which assisted her in going more comfortably through the last winter. We were therefore encouraged and advised to repeat our visit to Southampton this autumn. But the success was not the same. Her feet and legs had already begun to swell, and the evening before she set out she caught cold, which brought on a return of the fever and cough: and though Dr. Allen was successful in removing these symptoms in about a fortnight, and she bathed a few times, she could not persevere. However the advantages of situation, air, and exercise, being much greater than she could have in London, and as we were with friends whom she, as well as we dearly loved, she continued at Southampton six weeks. But she was unable to proceed to Mr. Etty's, who was very desirous of repeating his former kindness. The Lord strengthened her to perform her journey home without incon-

venience. She returned the 16th of September; then she entered our door for the last time, for she went out no more, till she was carried out to be put into the hearse.

I have thus got together, in one view, a brief account of what relates to her illness, till within the last three weeks of her pilgrimage. I now come to what is much more important and interesting. Her excellent parents had conscientiously endeavoured to bring her up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and the principles of religion had been instilled into her from her infancy.—Their labours were thus far attended with success, that no child could be more obedient or obliging, or more remote from evil habits, or evil tempers; but I could not perceive, when she first came to us, that she had any heart-affecting sense of divine things. But being under my roof, she of course, when her health would permit, attended on my ministry, and was usually present when I prayed and expounded the scriptures, morning and evening, in the family. Friends and ministers were likewise frequently with us, whose character and conversation were well suited to engage her notice, and to help her to form a right idea of the christian principles and temper. Knowing that she was of a thinking turn, I left her to make her own reflections upon what she saw and heard, committing her to the Lord, from whom I had received her, and entreating him to be her effectual teacher. When I did attempt to talk with her upon the concerns of her soul, she could give me no answer but with tears. But I soon had great encouragement to hope that the Lord had both enlightened her understanding, and had drawn the desires of her heart to himself. Great was her delight in the ordinances, exemplary her attention under the preaching. To be debarred from going to hear at our stated times, was a trial, which, though she patiently bore, seemed to affect her more than any other; and she did not greatly care what she endured in the rest of the week, provided she was well enough to attend the public worship. The judicious observations she occasionally made upon what had passed in conversation, upon incidents, books, and sermons, indicated a sound scriptural judgment, and a spiritual taste.—And my hope was confirmed by her whole deportment, which was becoming the gospel of Christ. So that had she died suddenly, on any day within about a year and a half past, I should have had no doubt that she had passed from death unto life. But I could seldom prevail with her to speak of herself; if she did, it was with the greatest diffidence and caution.

Soon after her return from Southampton, she became acquainted with acute pain, to which she had till then been much a stranger. Her gentle spirit, which had borne up under a long and languishing illness, was not so capable of supporting pain. It did not occasion any improper temper or language, but it wore her away apace. Friday, the 30th of September, she was down stairs for the last time, and then she was brought down and carried up in arms.

It now became very desirable to hear from herself a more explicit account of the hope that was in her; especially as upon some symptoms of an approaching mortification, she appeared to be a little alarmed, and of course not thoroughly reconciled to the thoughts of death. Her aunt waited for the first convenient opportunity of intimating to her the probability that the time of her departure was at hand. The next morning (Saturday the 1st of October) presented one. She found herself remarkably better, her pains were almost gone, her spirits revived, and the favourable change was visible in her countenance. Her aunt began to break the subject to her by saying, "My dear, were you not extremely ill last night!" She said, "Indeed I was." "Had you not been relieved I think you could not have continued long." "I believe I could not." "My dear, I have been very anxiously concerned for your life." "But I hope, my dear aunt, you are not so now." She then opened her mind and spoke freely. I cannot repeat the whole: the substance was to this effect. "My views of things have been for some time very different from what they were when I came to you. I have seen and felt the vanity of childhood and youth." Her aunt said, "I believe you have long made conscience of secret prayer." She answered, "Yes, I have long and earnestly sought the Lord with reference to the change which is now approaching. I have not yet that full assurance which is so desirable, but I have a hope, I trust a good hope, and I believe the Lord will give me whatever he sees necessary for me, before he takes me from hence. I have prayed to him to fit me for himself, and then, whether sooner or later, it signifies but little." Here was a comfortable point gained. We were satisfied that she had given up all expectations of living, and could speak of her departure without being distressed.

It will not be expected that a child at her age should speak systematically. Nor had she learnt her religion from a system or form of words, however sound. The Lord himself was her teacher. But from what little she had at different times said to me, I was well satisfied that she had received a true conviction of the evil of sin, and of her own state by nature as a sinner. When she spoke of the Lord, she meant the Lord Jesus Christ, the Great Shepherd, who gathers such lambs in his arm, and carries them in his bosom. She believed him to be God and man in one person; and that hope, of which she shall

never be ashamed, was founded on his atonement, grace and power. As I do not intend to put words into her mouth, which she never spoke, I mention this, lest any person should be disappointed at not finding a certain phraseology, which they may have been accustomed to.

Her apparent revival was of short duration. In the evening of the same day, she began to complain of a sore throat, which became worse, and before Sunday noon threatened an absolute suffocation. When Dr. Benamor, who the day before had almost entertained hopes of her recovery, found her so suddenly and greatly altered, he could not, at the moment, prevent some signs of his concern from appearing in his countenance. She quickly perceived it, and desired he would plainly tell her his sentiments. When he had recovered himself he said, "You are not so well as when I saw you on Saturday." She answered, "that she trusted all would be well soon." He replied, "that whether she lived or died, it would be well, and to the glory of God." He told me that he had much pleasing conversation with her that morning, some particulars of which he had committed to writing, but he lost the paper. —From that time she may be said to have been dying, as we expected her departure from one hour to another.

On Monday, the 3d, she was almost free from any complaint in her throat, but there was again an appearance of a mortification in her legs, which was again repelled by the means which Dr. Benamor prescribed. I recollect but little of the incidents of this day. In general she was in great pain, sometimes in agonies, unable to remain many minutes in the same position. But her mind was peaceful; she possessed a spirit of recollection and prayer: and her chief attention to earthly things seemed confined to the concern she saw in those who were around her. That she might not increase their feelings for her, she strove to conceal the sense of her own sufferings. It pleased the Lord wonderfully to support my dear Mrs. Newton, and she had a tolerable night's rest, though I did not expect the child would live till morning. On Tuesday the 4th, about nine in the morning, we all thought her dying, and waited near two hours by her bed side for her last breath. She was much convulsed and in great agonies. I said, "My dear, you are going to heaven, and I hope by the grace of God, we in due time shall follow you." She could not speak, but let us know that she attended to what I said by a gentle nod of her head, and a sweet smile. I repeated to her many passages of scripture, and verses of hymns, to each of which she made the same kind of answer. Though silent, her looks were more expressive than words. Towards eleven o'clock, a great quantity of coagulated phlegm, which she had not the strength to bring up, made her rattle violently in the throat, which we considered as a sign that death was at hand: and as she seemed unwilling to take something that was offered her, we were loth to disturb her in her last moments (as we supposed) by pressing her. I think she must have died in a quarter of an hour, had not Dr. Benamor just then come into the room. He felt her pulse, and observed that she was not near death by her pulse, and desired something might be given her. She was perfectly sensible, though still unable to speak, but expressed her unwillingness to take any thing, by very strong efforts. However she yielded to entreaty, and a tea-spoonful or two of some liquid soon cleared the passage, and she revived. Her pain however was extreme, and her disappointment great. I never saw her so near impatient as upon this occasion: as soon as she could speak she cried, "Oh cruel, cruel, to recall me, when I was so happy and so near gone! I wish you had not come; I long to go home." But in a few minutes she grew composed, assented to what the Doctor said, of her duty to wait the Lord's time; and from that hour, though her desires to depart and to be with her Saviour, were stronger and stronger, she cheerfully took whatever was offered her, and frequently asked for something of her own accord.— How often, if we were to have our choice, should we counteract our own prayers! I had entreated the Lord to prolong her life, till she could leave an indisputable testimony behind her, for our comfort. Yet when I saw her agony, and heard her say, "Oh! how cruel to stop me!" I was for a moment almost of her mind, and could hardly help wishing that the Doctor had delayed his visit a little longer. But if she had died then, we should have been deprived of what we saw and heard the two following days, the remembrance of which is now much more precious to me than silver or gold.

When the Doctor came on Wednesday, she entreated him to tell her how long he thought she might live; he said, "Are you in earnest, my dear?" She answered, "Indeed I am." At that time there were great appearances that a mortification was actually begun. He therefore told her, he thought it possible she might hold out till eight in the evening, but did not expect she could survive midnight at farthest. On hearing him say so, low as she was, her eyes seemed to sparkle with their former vivacity, and fixing them on him with an air of ineffable satisfaction, she said, "Oh that is good news indeed!" And she repeated it as such to a person who came soon after into the room, and said with lively emotions of joy, "The Doctor tells me I shall stay here but a few hours more." In the afternoon she noticed

and counted the clock, I believe, every time it struck, and when it struck seven, she said, "Another hour, and then." But it pleased the Lord to spare her to us another day.

She suffered much in the course of Wednesday night, but was quite resigned and patient. Our kind servants, who from their love to her and to us, watched her night and day with a solicitude and tenderness which wealth is too poor to purchase, were the only witnesses of the affectionate and grateful manner in which she repeatedly thanked them for their service and attention to her. Though such an acknowledgement was no more than their due, yet coming from herself, and at such a time, they highly valued it. She added her earnest prayers that the Lord would reward them. To her prayers my heart says, Amen. May they be comforted of the Lord in their dying hours, as she was, and meet with equal kindness from those about them!

I was surprised on Thursday morning to find her not only alive, but in some respects better. The tokens of mortification again disappeared. This was her last day, and it was a memorable day to us. When Dr. Benamor asked her how she was? She answered, "Truly happy, and if this be dying, it is a pleasant thing to die." [The very expression which a dear friend of mine used upon her death bed a few years ago.] She said to me about ten o'clock, "My dear uncle, I would not change conditions with any person upon earth. Oh how gracious is the Lord to me! Oh what a change is before me!" She was several times asked, if she could wish to live, provided the Lord should restore her to perfect health; her answer was, "Not for all the world," and sometimes, "Not for a thousand worlds."* "Do not weep for me, my dear aunt; but rather rejoice and praise on my account. I shall now have the advantage of my dear Miss Patty Barham (for whom she had a very tender affection, and who had been long in a languishing state,) for I shall go before her." We asked her if she would chuse a text for her own funeral sermon? She readily mentioned, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth. That," said she, "has been my experience; my afflictions have been many, but not one too many; nor has the greatest of them been too great; I praise him for them all." But after a pause she said, "Stay, I think there is another text which may do better; let it be, Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord. That is my experience now." She likewise chose a hymn to be sung after the sermon. Olney Hymns, book II. hymn 72.

But I must check myself, and set down but a small part of the gracious words which the Lord enabled her to speak in the course of the day, though she was frequently interrupted by pains and agonies. She had something to say either in the way of admonition or consolation, as she thought most suitable, to every one whom she saw. To her most constant attendant she said, "Be sure you continue to call upon the Lord; and if you think he does not hear you now, he will at last, as he has heard me." She spoke a great deal to an intimate friend, who was with her every day, which I hope she will long remember, as the testimony of her dying Eliza. Amongst other things, she said, "See how comfortable the Lord can make a dying bed! Do you think that you shall have such an assurance when you come to die?" Being answered, "I hope so, my dear," she replied, "But do you earnestly and with all your heart pray to the Lord for it? If you seek him, you shall surely find him." She then prayed affectionately and fervently for her friend, afterwards for her cousin, and then for another of our family who was present. Her prayer was not long, but her every word was weighty, and her manner very affecting—the purport was, that they might all be taught and comforted by the Lord. About five in the afternoon she desired me to pray with her once more. Surely I then prayed from my heart. When I had finished, she said, Amen. I said, "My dear child, have I expressed your meaning?" she answered, "Oh yes!" and then added, "I am ready to say, Why are his chariot wheels so long in coming! But I hope he will enable me to wait his hour with patience." These were the last words I heard her speak.

Mrs. Newton's heart was much, perhaps too much, attached to this dear child; which is not to be wondered at, considering what a child she was, and how long and how much she had suffered. But the Lord graciously supported her in this trying season. Indeed there was much more cause for joy than for grief: yet the pain of separation will be felt. Eliza well knew her feelings, and a concern for her was, I believe, the last anxiety that remained with her. She said to those about her, "Try to persuade my aunt to leave the room; I think I shall soon go to sleep, I shall not remain with you till the morning." Her aunt, however, was the last person who heard her speak, and was sitting by her bed when she went away. A little past six, hearing that a relation who dearly loved her, and was beloved by her, and who had come daily from Westminster to see her, was below stairs, she said, "Raise me up, that I may speak to him once more." Her aunt said, "My dear, you are nearly exhausted. I think you had better not attempt it." She smiled, and said, "It is very well, I will not." She was then within half an hour of her translation to glory, but the love of our

* The last time she was asked this question, she said (as I have since been informed,) "I desire to have no choice."

dear Lord had so filled her with benevolence, that she was ready to exert herself to her last breath, in hopes of saying something that might be useful to others after she was gone.

Towards seven o'clock, I was walking in the garden, and earnestly engaged in prayer for her, when a servant came to me and said, "She is gone." O Lord, how great is thy power! how great is thy goodness! A few days before, had it been practicable and lawful, what would I not have given to procure her recovery? Yet seldom in my life have I known a more heart-felt joy, than when these words, *She is gone*, sounded in my ears. I ran up stairs, and our whole little family were soon around her bed.—Though her aunt and another person were sitting with their eyes fixed upon her, she was gone perhaps a few minutes before she was missed. She lay upon her left side, with her cheek gently reclining upon her hand, as if in a sweet sleep. And I thought there was a smile upon her countenance. Never surely did death appear in a more beautiful, inviting form! We fell upon our knees, and I returned (I think I may say) my most unfeigned thanks to our God and Saviour, for his abundant goodness to her, crowned in this last instance, by giving her so gentle a dismission. Yes, I am satisfied. I am comforted. And if one of the many involuntary tears I have shed, could have recalled her to life, to health, to an assemblage of all that this world could contribute to her happiness, I would have laboured hard to suppress it. Now my largest desires for her are accomplished. The days of her mourning are ended. She is landed on that peaceful shore, where the storms of trouble never blow.—She is for ever out of the reach of sorrow, sin, temptation, and snares. Now she is before the throne! she sees Him whom not having seen she loved; she drinks of the rivers of pleasure which are at his right hand, and shall thirst no more.

She was born at St. Margaret's, Rochester, February 6, 1771. Her parents settled at Anstruther, in Fife, in 1773. She returned to us———March 15, 1783. She breathed her spirit into her Redeemer's hands a little before seven in the evening, on October 6, 1785, aged fourteen years and eight months.

I shall be glad if this little narrative may prove an encouragement to my friends who have children. May we not conceive the Lord saying to us, as Pharaoh's daughter said to the mother of Moses, "Take this child, and bring it up for me, and I will pay thee thy wages?" How solemn the trust! How important and difficult the discharge of it! but how rich the reward if our endeavours are crowned with success! And we have every thing to hope from his power and goodness, if, in dependence upon his blessing, we can fully and diligently aim at fulfilling his will. Happy they who will say at the last day, "Behold, here am I, and the children which thou hast given me."

The children of my friends will likewise see my narrative. May it convince them that it is practicable, and good, to seek the Lord betimes! My dear Eliza's state of languor prevented her from associating with young people of her own age, so frequently and freely as she might otherwise have done. But these papers will come into the hands of some such, whom she knew and whom she loved. To them, I particularly commend and dedicate this relation. O my dear young friends, had you seen with what dignity of spirit she filled up the last scene of her life, you must have been affected by it! Let not the liveliness of your spirits, and the gaiety of the prospect around you, prevent you from considering, that to you likewise, days will certainly come (unless you are suddenly snatched out of life) when you will say and feel, that the world, and all in it, can afford you no pleasure. But there is a Saviour, and a mighty One, always near, always gracious to those who seek Him. May you, like her, be enabled to choose Him, as the Guide of your youth, and the Lord of your hearts. Then like her, you will find support and comfort under affliction, wisdom to direct your conduct, a good hope in death, and by death a happy translation to everlasting life.

I have only to add my prayers, that a blessing from on high may descend upon the persons and families of all my friends, and upon all into whose hands this paper may providentially come.

JOHN NEWTON.

Charles's Square, Hoxton,
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THE END.

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